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Robt Burns

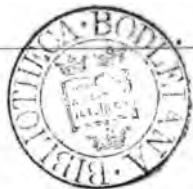
BURNS IN DUMFRIESSHIRE:

A SKETCH OF THE LAST EIGHT YEARS
OF THE POET'S LIFE.

BY

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P R E F A C E .

IN the "History of Dumfries," published nearly three years ago, there are two chapters devoted to the life of Robert Burns, when residing in that ancient burgh. Some admirers of the poet were good enough to express their approval of what had been said of him in the history, and to follow up their favourable verdict with a proposal that the sketch should be reproduced in a separate form. As a result of this suggestion, the present little work was prepared for the press. The narrative of Burns's Dumfries experiences has been carefully revised and considerably enlarged; a new chapter has been written respecting the poet's sojourn in Ellisland; and some additional notes, with an Appendix, have been introduced, in order to make the work more locally complete.

"Burns in Dumfriesshire" is not offered to the public as an original biography of the national bard, neither does it profess to give an exhaustive memoir of him as an inhabitant of that county; it is simply an outline, with illustrations, old and new, showing what he was as a man, and what he did as a poet, during 1788-1796, the last eight years he spent on earth.

It is not necessary, for the sake of connection, to trace the leading incidents in the existence of Burns prior to the beginning of the Ellisland period, as these are so generally known. Instead of this being done, let the following pregnant paragraph suffice:—
"Between the month of May, 1786, and the month of April, 1788—that is, between the ages of twenty-seven and twenty-nine—he (Burns) is deserted and disowned by Jean Armour; he is solemnly

betrothed to Mary Campbell ; his poems, written chiefly, it may be said, as well as printed, in the interval, appear ; twin children are born to him by Jean Armour, one of whom subsequently dies ; Mary Campbell dies ; his life in Edinburgh begins ; new and enlarged edition of his poems appears ; after tour through the south he returns to Mauchline ; Jean Armour repents, and his intimacy with her is renewed ; after tour in the north he returns again to Edinburgh ; is introduced to Mrs. Maclehose (Clarinda), with whom his celebrated correspondence begins ; returns once more to Mauchline ; takes Jean himself secretly to Tarbolton Mill for her confinement there in disgrace, where twins are again born, both of whom die ; acknowledges Jean Armour for his wife ; satisfies the Church ; satisfies affectionately mother, brother, and sisters, out of his miraculous £500 (profit from his poems) ; and makes final arrangements for his own removal, with wife and family, to Ellisland." The author from whom we have quoted this passage (Dr. P. Hatley Waddell), truly remarks in connection with it that "no reader nor any writer, with unassisted memory can imagine the actual amount of personal and domestic excitement—of love, of sorrow, of temptation, and of triumph, that was crowded into so brief a space as that of two years, at the commencement of this epoch of his life." Immediately after the eventful period here described, Burns appears as a Dumfriesshire farmer, and his career in that capacity is traced in the opening chapter.

KINGHOLMBANK, DUMFRIES,

May, 1870.

BURNS IN DUMFRIESSHIRE.

CHAPTER I.—ELLISLAND.

BURNS RESOLVES TO LEAD A RETIRED, DOMESTIC LIFE—HE MARRIES JEAN ARMOUR, AND BECOMES TENANT OF ELLISLAND—POSITION OF THE FARM—LODGES AT ISLE TILL A DWELLING-HOUSE IS BUILT FOR HIM—HIS WIFE JOINS HIM, AND THEY TAKE POSSESSION OF THEIR NEW RESIDENCE—THE FARM DESCRIBED—HAPPY LIFE OF THE POET DURING HIS FIRST YEAR IN NITHSDALE—FOREBODINGS OF EVIL—HE BECOMES AN EXCISEMAN—SOME OF HIS CHIEF PRODUCTIONS AT ELLISLAND NOTICED: “THE WOUNDED HARE,” “THE WHISTLE,” “ADDRESS TO MARY IN HEAVEN”—ANECDOTES OF THE EXCISEMAN-POET—VISITORS TO ELLISLAND—CAPTAIN GROSE—PRODUCTION OF “TAM O’ SHANTER”—HEROINES OF THE POET: MRS. RIDDEL, DEBORAH DAVIES, JEAN LORIMER, &C.—KIRSTY KIRKPATRICK SINGING THE POET’S SONGS—MORE ANECDOTES—ADIEU TO ELLISLAND.

WHEN ROBERT BURNS resolved to set up a domestic establishment of his own, and settle quietly down in a rural district, he was fresh from the flattering but unprofitable caresses lavished upon him by the Edinburgh “gentry;” and the acclamations of the country, hailing him as the prince of Scottish poets, were yet ringing in his ears. It was a difficult experiment he was about to make. The “Modern Athens” did not spoil the peasant bard: he withstood wonderfully its intoxicating influences; but will he, after being used to the blandishments of the great city; after receiving the homage of the high-born, the gifted, and the fair; be content to withdraw from the public gaze, and undertake steady industrial work and grave family responsibilities, the task being rendered all the more difficult from the circumstance that he is still in the flush of early manhood, “with passions wild and strong,” that have never been tamed by principle, and seldom even been regulated by prudence? He must needs try the venture. The great folks who

gazed upon him as a prodigy do nothing for him, and he must do a good deal for himself and his dependants—Jean Armour, to whom, after a long, fitful courtship, he has just been wedded, and the twin children she had borne to him. “These moving things caad wife and weans” touch his inmost heart, and demand his undivided care. So the bard feels and thinks; and, bidding the allurements of fame and pleasure begone, he honestly resolves to enter upon a plodding, placid life with his Bonnie Jean and their little ones, on the banks of Nith at Ellisland.

The parish of Dunscore, in the east nook of which the poet resolved to pitch his tent, presents a great variety of scenery. Three valleys diverging from its village capital, Cottack, stretch north, east, and west, each with an environment of hills, some of which are soft with sylvan garniture, while others are rugged unwooded peaks, rising 1200 feet above the Solway, which is seen as a fine feature in the view to the south. The river Nith, entering from the north, forms for nearly two miles the eastern fringe of the parish, as it courses along in the direction of Dumfries, the alluvial soil on its banks forming the most fertile portion of Burns’s farm; and the district, while attractive to his poetic eye, was fitted to sustain his patriotism, being rich with associations respecting Wallace wight, Bruce the hero-king, the doughty Kirkpatricks of Closeburn, once lords of Ellisland, and the persecuted Covenanters, to whose noble contendings for liberty he afterwards paid a glowing tribute, in the well-known lines—

“The solemn League and Covenant
 Cost Scotland blood—cost Scotland tears:
 But it sealed freedom’s sacred cause—
 If thou’rt a slave, indulge thy sneers.”

A smaller stream, the Cairn, courses through the other end of the parish, and in its romantic “meander” he would find a realization of his own exquisite picture—

“Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
 As thro’ the glen it wimpl’t;
 Whyles round a rocky scar it strays;
 Whyles in a wiel it dimpl’t;
 Whyles glitter’d to the nightly rays,
 Wi’ bickerin, dancin dazzle;
 Whyles cocket underneath the braes,
 Below the spreading hazle.”

When Burns took the farm from its proprietor—the ingenious Patrick Miller, who resided at his mansion of Dalswinton, on

the opposite side of the river—there was no suitable house upon it; and, till one according to his own design should be built, he lodged with the outgoing tenant,* in a very humble domicile, overshadowed by the tower of Isle, once the seat of the Fergussons, and one of the finest surviving specimens of a Scottish gentleman's mansion in the olden time. It was at Whitsunday, 1788, that the poet first set up his staff in Nithsdale, but the summer of that year was at an end before Mrs. Burns could be invited to join him; and in the interval he led a somewhat roving and unsatisfactory life. Writing on the 9th of September, he says—"I am busy with my harvest, but for all that most pleasurable part of life called social intercourse, I am here at the very elbow of existence;" and a week later he indulges in a still more wailing strain—"This hovel that I shelter in," he says, "while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated by smoke." "You will be pleased to hear," he adds, in a less unhappy mood, "that I have laid aside idle *eclat*, and bind every day after my reapers." His tedium was at times beguiled, and the darkness of the "hovel" irradiated, by visits from the Muse—his absent wife, however, being still more than Coila the inspirer of his strains. In one famous love-laden lyric sent to her

* This was one David Cullie, or Kelly, who was a devoted member of the Anti-burgher congregation in Dumfries, that had for its minister the late Mr. Inglis. The examination for the district was held in Cullie's house. On such high occasions a dinner was always given, Burns and his wife being frequently among the guests. The poet had thus an opportunity of meeting with the minister, and formed such a high opinion of him that he often attended his church afterwards.—(*Mrs. Burns's Memoranda*, as written down by the late Mr. M'Diarmid, and printed for the first time in the appendix of P. Hatley Waddell's splendid edition of Burns.) From the same valuable reminiscences by the poet's widow we borrow the following anecdote:—"Before this time Burns had written the 'Holy Fair,' and an impression had gone abroad that he was rather a scoffer or a free-thinker. David Cullie and his wife were aware of this; and although they treated him civilly as the incoming tenant, during the five months he resided under their roof, still they felt for him as for one who was by no means on the right path. On one occasion Nance and the bard were sitting in the spence, when the former turned the conversation on her favourite topic, religion. Mr. Burns, from whatever motive, sympathised with the matron, and quoted so much Scripture that she was fairly astonished. When she went ben she said to her husband,—'Oh! David Cullie, how they have wrangled that man; for I think he has mair o' the Bible off his tongue than Mr. Inglis himsel.' The bard enjoyed the compliment, and about the first thing he communicated to his wife on her arrival was 'the lift he had got from old Nance.'"

he declared that "day and night my fancy's flight is ever wi' my Jean;" and he prayed thus—

"O blaw ye westlin' winds, blaw saft, among the leafy trees,
Wi' gentle gale frae muir and dale bring hame the laden bees,
And bring the lassie back to me that's aye sae neat and clean;
Ae blink o' her wad banish care, sae lovely is my Jean."*

But it was not till "chill November's surly blast" had made bare the fields of Ellisland and the neighbouring bowers of Friar's Carse that Bonnie Jean in very deed tripped down to Nithsdale, bringing summer to the bosom of her disconsolate lord. Then he sang an exuberant song which at once gave her welcome and expressed his own proud sense of independence—

"I hae a wife o' my ain, I'll partake wi' naebody;
I hae a penny to spend—there—thanks to naebody;
I hae naething to lend—I'll borrow frae naebody."

Their new house is completed, comfortable enough, it seems, and, withal, sufficiently commonplace, but as their future home it is sacred in the eyes of the young couple; and when they cross its threshold it begins to acquire a dignity that in the end dwarfs all the big mansions of the parish. The house is finished and furnished, and it must be taken possession of with accustomed rites and in due form. The road to it from the Isle, a short half-mile in length, is along a high bush-fringed margin of the river; and over this always beautiful and henceforth classic ground, Burns and his partner, arm-in-arm, he, muscular and swarthy, she, light, handsome, and fair, travelled with solemn pace and slow, preceded by a peasant girl carrying the Family Bible and a bowl of salt. With such propitiatory accompaniments Ellisland was reached, and Burns entered into the occupancy of what was "comparatively to him

* Mr. Andrew Nicholson, shoemaker, Dumfries, whose late wife was long a servant to the poet's widow, has in his possession a letter addressed by the poet to Mrs. Burns, dated Ellisland, 12th Sept., 1788, of which the following is an extract:—"My Dear Love—I received your kind letter with a pleasure which no letter but one from you could have given me. I dreamed of you the whole night last; but alas! I fear it will be three weeks yet ere I can hope for the happiness of seeing you. My harvest is going on; I have some to cut down still, but I put in two stacks to-day, so I [am] as tired as a dog." . . . The poet proceeds to speak about table linen for the house, mentioning that his old landlady, "Nance," thinks the best may be got for two shillings a yard; and that he means to be some day soon in Dumfries, and will ask the price there. Then follows the kindly and characteristic intimation—"I expect your new gowns will be very forward, or ready to make, against I be home to get the baiveridge."

the Great Babylon that he had built."* Should we not rather say that, almost unconsciously to himself, he thereby inaugurated a new temple of poesy, with the Nith for its Castalia? During one of the happy days that followed, the poet, in composing another song dedicated to his wife, prayed for a draught from the inspiring stream and a place on Parnassus that he might suitably sing her praise; but, looking to the river that ran wimpling by, to the huge hill near which it rises, and, above all, to the winsome subject of his strain, he might well say as he did—

"But Nith maun be my muse's well,
My muse maun be thy bonie sell;
On Corsincon I'll glow'r and spell,
And write how dear I love thee."

A tolerably commodious house it was for a small farmer, having five rooms, including the kitchen. The household consisted at first of Burns and his wife, the poet's sister, and a domestic servant, together with two men and two women engaged for out-door work. Mrs. Burns had now only one child living, Robert, who was brought up for awhile under the care of his grandfather at Mossiel, and afterwards added to the family circle at Ellisland. The farm extended to 170 imperial acres, and, though generally the soil was not deep, or what is called "kindly," it was moderately productive, being excelled in this respect by none in the parish. Nor was the rent heavy; for the first three years it was to be £50 a year, and during the remainder of the lease (which was for four successive terms of nineteen years each) it was to be £70, the tenant getting from the proprietor £300 for the expense of the dwelling-house and offices. Burns realised a profit of about £500 from the Edinburgh edition of his poems, more than one-third of which was generously given by him to help his brother Gilbert out of debt, and the rest of the money was spent on household plenishing and stock for the farm.

Heartily and hopefully did this agricultural Apollo enter upon his duties. He was no mere gentleman-farmer: while looking after others, he lent a helping hand himself at ploughing (in which he greatly excelled), harrowing, sowing, and harvest work. For a series of months he was a model of laborious industry, tilling his acres, cultivating also at leisure hours his heaven-sent gifts, relaxing at times "to beet the flame" of friendly intercourse, but

* Chambers's *Life and Works of Burns*, Vol. III., p. 59.

rarely indulging deep, and never giving himself up to dissipation. The first year of his sojourn in the new house at Ellisland passed rapidly away, for it was the happiest that ever fell to his lot—a brief, bright year, seemingly to him but a short prolongation of the honeymoon. We see him during this halcyon period as a faithful husband, as a good master, as the honoured head of a decent household, beginning each week with a regular attendance at the parish church—though he does not quite relish the Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick's rigid Calvinism—and we see him, according to a good old custom, catechising his domestics on the evening of the day of rest. With his neighbours, too, gentle and simple, we find him on the best of terms. No longer at “the elbow of existence,” his house has become the attractive centre of an ever-widening social circle. A certain Highland chief said, on one occasion, that wherever he sat was the head of the table; and this wonderful verse-maker and captivating talker is flattered, and at times perplexed, by finding himself made a lion of wherever he goes, till at length rural Ellisland allows him little more rest than populous “Edina.”

Under such circumstances it was no wonder, though a great pity, that the farm did not pay. How sad that “the corn rigs and barley rigs,” to which Burns the poet had been so complimentary, made such a poor return to Burns the husbandman, and that dire necessity compelled him to leave his place “of glory and of joy” behind the plough, in order to “search auld wives barrels” and give chase to marauding smugglers. Before coming to Dumfriesshire, Mr. Graham, of Fintry, had placed the poet's name on the list of expectant Excise officers, and on this contingent commission he, in the autumn of 1789, fell back, when his means were reduced and his family expenses were increased by the birth of another son. He was at once placed upon active duty as a “gauger,” with a salary of £50, a welcome addition to his income, though the office itself, then a very unpopular one, was highly distasteful to his haughty spirit. He sought for and accepted it from a sense of duty, and in the hope that it would help him to place his household beyond the reach of want.

According to a new arrangement, Ellisland was to be made more of a dairy than an arable farm, the poet considering that, while Jean, with the assistance of some of her west country sisterhood, managed the cows and their produce,* he might go on with the

* Burns at this time kept nine or ten milk cows, some young cattle, five horses, and several pet sheep; of the latter he was very fond. Statement

Excise business, and still have a sufficiency of time for the reduced rural operations that would devolve upon himself. "It was," says Allan Cunningham, "a good and plausible plan, but

"The best laid schemes of mice and men
Gang aft agley."

Though Burns thus fondly thought that he was doubly armed against the shafts of fate, he was fighting a losing battle. His "May of life" was over when he entered the Excise, and before the third year of his lease began, "the golden days of Ellisland," as Dr. Currie calls them, were getting dim. But not so the fine ore of the poet's genius. In spite of failing crops, and sometimes indifferent health, hard official labour requiring him to ride about 200 miles a-week, and occasional heavy drinking, into which he was drawn by troops of admiring visitors, the lustre of his intellect shone forth with undiminished radiance, and at times with unprecedented splendour. The products of a single year, 1789, include his fine address to the Nith; three of his famous Election Ballads; his biting satire, "The Kirk's Alarm;" his beautiful lyric, "Go, fetch to me a pint of wine;" his jovial drinking song, "Willie brewed a peck o' maut;" that inimitable embodiment of connubial love, "John Anderson, my Jo;" and others, some of which require to be specially though briefly noticed.

While Burns was out on an April morning, sowing grass seeds, the crack of a shot burst upon his ears, and soon after his eye and heart were pained by the spectacle of "a poor little wounded hare coming crippling by." His feelings found momentary vent in a muttered curse upon the sportsman, and perpetual expression in a well-known poem, which closes with a characteristic reference to his "fellow-mortal," the wounded "maukin"—

"Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hapless fate."

In the following autumn a great Bacchanalian ballad was thrown off at red heat by the poet. No genius, however captivating, can redeem from utter folly the incidents of the notorious Whistle

by William Clark, who lived with him as servant during the winter half-year (he thinks) of 1789-90.—Chambers's Burns, Vol. III., p. 140. At a later date, the poet had twelve dairy cows; and his horses were reduced to three—two for ploughing ("a pretty gray team," says Mrs. Burns), and a saddle horse.

contest waged on the 16th of October, 1789. The combatants were three worthy gentlemen: Burns's kind friend and neighbour, Captain Riddel of Glenriddel and Friar's Carse; Mr. Fergusson of Craigarroch; and Sir Robert Laurie, M.P. for Dumfriesshire. That these respectable country squires, one of them an elder of the Kirk, another a member of Parliament, should sit deliberately down in daylight to strive who of them should imbibe most claret, while at the same time retaining ability to blow on "the whistle of worth" "a requiem shrill" over his prostrated rivals, seems, from our modern point of view, the very delirium of insanity. But the affair chimed in well with the high-flying humours of the age: hence Burns did not disdain to become its laureate.

The tourney took place in the spacious dining-hall of Friar's Carse—a house built about 1774, on a piece of rising ground round which the Nith makes a graceful curve, separating into two parts the holm that stretches out above and below the mansion, the flat land in either case being hemmed in by lofty tree-covered banks, and the whole constituting a scene of unusual beauty. Over a portion of this charming landscape, lying between Ellisland and Carse, our poet passed to the drinking arena, invited thither to be the umpire and chronicler of the fray. Seated at the south-east window, with rum and brandy before him, and pen in hand, he marked the progress and recorded the incidents of the mighty strife, which terminated, need we say? in the triumph of Craigarroch, whom Burns thus apostrophised in the closing verse of his completed poem—

"Thy line, that have struggled for freedom with Bruce,
Shall heroes and patriots ever produce:
So thine be the laurel, and mine be the bay;
The field thou hast won, by yon bright god of day!"

The Whistle poem is a wonderful production, especially in having been written under such circumstances as have been narrated, but Burns would have been better we think without the "bay" it brought him.

On the third or fourth evening after the Friar's Carse saturnalia, Burns, while sitting by the fireside, was observed by his wife to grow "very sad about something." Soothing words from her lips lost their wonted influence; and he "refused to be comforted." Alas for the poor bard! he was in sorrowful communion with the "dear departed shade" of Mary Campbell, summoned up by his excited fancy on this the third anniversary of her death. Her image

when he last parted from her, glowing with health and beauty, came vividly before him; "the golden hours" spent with her by the "gurgling Ayr" making darker by contrast her early grave and the desolate heart over which the fair Highland girl still reigned supreme. Frenzied with grief, he hastened out of the house to the barn-yard, followed by Mrs. Burns, who entreated him to return, as the night was cold. The poet, though promising compliance, still remained outside, striding up and down, and gazing on the starry heavens. Then, as if overpowered by the burden of his woe, he threw himself down on a heap of straw. In this plight Mrs. Burns found the unhappy mourner, with his eyes still directed upwards to a planet of unusual brilliancy—"the ling'ring star" whose beams linger still to illumine the poet's brightest page. He now readily returned, his great grief having abated under the influence of the poetical afflatus which had come down upon him with exalting power, yet soft as dew upon the grass, and bringing to his tortured bosom "a sweet oblivious antidote." Giving full vent to his feelings, he immediately put upon paper in a complete and perfect form the sublime ode to "Mary in Heaven," the divinest of all his poems. Shall we say that such anguish as Burns experienced in these few autumn hours at Ellisland was more than compensated to him by the glorious production to which it gave birth?

Burns disliked the excisemanship; yet, besides the much-needed money it brought to him, it had its redeeming features, providing as it did adventurous rides over ten parishes, which, however, he would have enjoyed the more had the work been less exactive. He proved to be a zealous and efficient officer; but the man who mourned over the poor wounded "wanderer of the wood and field," over the other "wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie," when its nest was ruined by the ploughshare, who pitied the "wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower" when "crushed beneath the furrows," and who did not even put "auld Nickie-ben" beyond the range of his benevolence, could not be hard upon his weak fellow-mortals when they sinned against the Excise. Faithful in all material matters to the Government, he could sometimes close his eyes and shut his ears against small infringements of the law, especially when the transgressors were humble folks, and when little would have been gained in any way by treating them harshly. Burns's fellow-*dalesmen* of the present generation are almost as fond of dwelling upon this merciful ingredient in his character as upon the poems by which he has cast a glory over their district. With

them, therefore, such anecdotes as the following are extremely popular.

One day, Allan Cunningham tells us, the poet and a brother officer entered the shop of a widow woman in Dunscore, and made a seizure of smuggled tobacco. "Jenny," said the bard, "I expected that this would be the upshot. Here, Lewars, take note of the number of rolls as I count them. Now, Jock, did ye ever hear an auld wife numbering her threads before check-reels were invented? Thou's ane, and thou's no ane, and thou's ane a' out—listen." As he handed out the rolls he went on with his humorous reckoning, all the while dropping every other roll into Janet's lap. Lewars made the desired memorandum with commendable gravity, seeing, as if he did not see, the considerate conduct of his colleague.

The late Professor Gillespie of St. Andrews remembered seeing Burns on a fair day in August, 1790, at the village of Thornhill, where a poor woman named Kate Watson had taken up the publican's trade for that occasion without a licence. "I saw the poet," he says, "enter her door, and anticipated nothing short of an immediate seizure of a certain grey-beard and barrel which, to my personal knowledge, contained the contraband commodities our bard was in search of. A nod, accompanied by a significant movement of the fore-finger, brought Kate to the doorway, and I was near enough to hear the following words distinctly uttered:—'Kate, are you mad? Don't you know that the Supervisor and I will be in upon you in the course of forty minutes. Good-bye t'ye at present.' I had access to know that the friendly hint was not neglected. It saved a poor widow from a fine of several pounds for committing a quarterly offence, by which the revenue was probably subject to an annual loss of five shillings."*

Jean Dunn, a suspected trader in the neighbouring parish of Kirkpatrick-Durham, observing Burns and another Exciseman named Robertson drawing near her house on the morning of a fair, slipped out by the back-door, as if to evade their scrutiny, leaving in the cabin her attendant for the day, and a little girl, her daughter. "Has there been any brewing for the fair here to-day," demanded our poet, on entering. "O no, sir," said the servant, "we hae nae licence for that." "That's no true," exclaimed the child, "the muckle black kist is fu' o' the bottles o' yill that my mother sat up a' nicht brewing for the fair."

* *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, 1829.

"Does that bird speak," said Robertson, pointing to one hanging in a cage. "There is no use for another speaking bird in this house," said Burns, "while that little lassie is to the fore. We are in a hurry just now; but as we return from the fair we'll examine the muckle black kist." As a matter of course, when they did return the witnessing bottles had vanished from the chest.

During the closing months of 1789, and for a year and a half afterwards, Burns was overtasked. The greatest genius of his day went through an amount of drudgery that would have killed any common man; and hard work, incomparably more than hard drinking, began to tell upon his constitution, making him look older than he ought to have done at the age of thirty-two. He was "frequently to be seen at an early hour in the fields with his sowing sheet;* and Mrs. Burns records that she has "walked with a child in her arms on the banks of the Nith, and seen him sow after breakfast two bags of corn for the folk to harrow through the day."† After such a preliminary spell, he would mount one of his horses, "Pegasus" or "Peg Nicholson," and scour through two or more of the upland parishes, stopping at all the public houses, grocery shops, tanneries, and breweries in his round, taking a note of their excisable stock, and entering the same in his memorandum-book, such routine official duties being curiously interlaced with exalted musings that, coursing through his busy brain, kept him steeped in poetry even when his work was most prosaic. Returned after a rough ride of thirty miles, he dines late, writes three or four of those marvellous prose letters, which help to make up the most unique correspondence ever penned, finishing off perhaps with a rhymed epistle to Dr. Blacklock, the one, it may be, in which the poet points out to his friend the motive-power of all his labours—

"I hae a wife and twa wee laddies,
They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies;
Ye ken yersels my heart right proud is—
 I need na vaunt,
But I'll sned besoms, thraw saugh woodies,
 Before they want."

Then comes tea, with pleasant family table-talk, followed possibly by a glass of toddy, and almost certainly by the perusal of some favourite author. Then—to bed? Not so, reader, for hasn't the

* Testimony of his servant William Clark.

† Mrs. Burns's Memoranda.

call "Rob M'Quechan's Elshin," from a tradition that when King Robert Bruce was fleeing after a defeat on the Water of Cairn, the heel of his boot became loosened, and he applied to one Robert M'Quechan to fasten it; who, to "mak siccar," ran his awl nine inches up the hero's heel! "We were now," says Mr. Ramsay, "going on at a great rate, when Mr. Stewart popped in his head, which put a stop to our discourse. Yet in a little while it was resumed; and such was the force and versatility of the bard's genius, that he made the tears run down Mr. Stewart's cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain."

Of all Burns's visitors no one was so congenial to him as Captain Grose, famous as a learned antiquarian, but still better known as the "fine, fat, fodgeg wight" who figures grotesquely, yet lovingly, in the poet's verse. They "forgathered" at Friar's Carse, and at once became sworn friends. What cracks they would have anent the old-world times and "howlet-haunted biggins!" for Burns had a genial sympathy with the antiquarianism of his guest, and would be able to recount to him some of the traditions which, like woodbine and wallflower, hung about the Friar's house at Carse, the Isle, the Tower of Lag, the Castle of the Red Comyn at Dalswinton, the stronghold of the Kirkpatrick's of Closeburn, and other ruins which made the district rich for the "chiel" that was "takin notes" of all such objects with the intent of printing them. An old witch story about Alloway Kirk, in Ayrshire, attracted the special attention of Grose when told to him by Burns, and, at the request of the antiquary, the poet agreed to put the legend into aversified form.

The engagement was more than fulfilled; just as when the promise of a silver crown-piece is munificently redeemed by the gift of a purse of gold. For one day at least all prosaic business must be set aside, that the poet may, by doing full justice to his theme, gratify his friend. He is seen in the forenoon pacing to and fro along his favourite walk southward of the house, beside the river. Some hours afterwards Mrs. Burns, with her two children, Robert and Francis Wallace, join him; but perceiving that he is deeply absorbed—"busy crooning to himsel"—she, guided by true womanly tact, retires with her little prattlers, and from behind some "lang yellow broom" growing upon the bank, she keeps a loving look-out, unperceived by the poet. He becomes increasingly excited; his manner is that of a pythonesse, so strange and wild are his gesticulations, and, though now at the remote end of the promenade, she can perceive that he is "*agonized* with an ungovernable access of

joy." It is his masterpiece of Tam o' Shanter with which he is busy. He is so far advanced with it that heroic Tam has been brought in full sight of the fantastic dancers, and then the poet bursts out with the apostrophe so loud that his listening wife hears every line—

"Now, Tam! O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens,
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linnen!
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies!"

The "fine frenzy" of Burns continued till the poem was completed, and, lest the glow of his first fresh conceptions should in any degree cool down, he, with a sod-dyke for desk, committed the poem to paper. Then, returning to the house, he read it in triumph to Bonnie Jean. Even as the farm-yard of Ellisland witnessed the agonizing throes in which the poet's most pathetic effusion was produced, so this walk of his, since trodden by hosts of admiring visitors, was the scene of his most joyful ecstasy and of his proudest achievement. "Tam o' Shanter," says Alexander Smith, with pardonable exaggeration, "was written in a day—since Bruce fought Bannockburn, the best single day's work done in Scotland."*

At Friar's Carse Burns became acquainted with two ladies whose friendship he valued still more perhaps than that of Captain Grose. These were the accomplished Maria Woodley, daughter of a governor of Berbice, who had been married, at a very early age, to Mr. Walter Riddel, a younger brother of Glenriddel; and Deborah Davies, a young handsome Englishwoman, also related to the Riddels. Mrs. Walter Riddel attracted the bard by her vivacity and wit; and such were the beauty and grace of Miss Davies that she became the object of his idolatry and the theme of some of his finest effusions. Tiny in stature, the epithet "wee," which is often used by the Scotch as a term of endearment, was doubly expressive when applied by him to this little queen of the fairies; and surely it was never made to sound more musically than when he thus addressed her—

"Bonie wee thing, cannie wee thing,
Lovely wee thing, wast thou mine,
I wad wear thee in my bosom,
Lest my jewel I should tine.

* Preface to Works of Burns, Vol. I., p. xc.

Wistfully I look and languish
 In that bonie face o' thine;
 And my heart it stounds wi' anguish,
 Lest my wee thing be na mine."

One day when the poet was at the pretty watering-place of Moffat, two ladies rode past—one tall and portly, and the other "the bonie wee thing" of his muse. A friend asked him why God had made Miss Davies so little while her companion was so large, and he at once produced the epigram—

"Ask why God made the gem so small,
 An' why so huge the granite?
 Because God meant mankind should set
 The higher value on it."

This impromptu was afterwards written by the poet on a window pane of the Black Bull Inn at Moffat, but the piece of glass which it emblazoned has long since disappeared.

Near the village just named there is a romantic spot called Craigieburn Wood, which is famous as the birth-place of Burns's Chloris, Jean Lorimer. When the poet went to Ellisland, her father, an opulent farmer and merchant, resided two miles further down the river, on the opposite bank, at Kemmis Hall. Mr. Lorimer being a dealer in excisable commodities, Burns had to visit him professionally; but ere long the inspired gauger was on intimate terms with all the members of the family. "The Lorimers," says Mr. Chambers, "scarcely ever had company at their house without inviting him, they often sent him delicacies from their farm; and whenever he passed their way, on his professional tours, Mrs. Lorimer was delighted to minister to his comforts with a basin of tea, or whatever else he might please to have."* Lovely, indeed, must have been the eldest daughter of Mr. Lorimer, if worthy, as we understand she was, of the praises lavished by the poet on her charms. To celebrate them he composed no fewer than eleven songs, including "The lassie wi' the lint-white locks," "Craigieburn Wood," and "She says she lo'es me best of a';" which last production embodies one of the finest portraiture of female beauty ever drawn—

"Sae flaxen were her ringlets,
 Her eyebrows of a darker hue,
 Bewitchingly o'er-arching
 Twa laughing een o' bonie blue.

* Life and Works of Burns, Vol. IV., p. 103.

Her smiling, sae wyling,
 Wad make a wretch forget his woe;
 What pleasure, what treasure,
 Unto these rosy lips to grow!
 Such was my Chloris' bonie face,
 When first her bonie face I saw,
 And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,
 She says she lo'es me best of a'."

Burns's worship of Chloris, like that offered up to his other Ellisland idols, was purely Platonic. In her case he did his best to promote the suit of a brother-excise-man, named John Gillespie, who was deep in love with Miss Lorimer. Disappointing him, she married a dissipated young Cumberland farmer, named Whelpdale, who resided at Barnhill, near Moffat, and the unhappy Chloris was doomed to expiate by a life of misery the folly of an hour.*

During his journeyings over the district, Burns met with another lady, whose eyes of blue gave him (poetically) a deadly wound, and purchased immortality for herself; for, did he not say of her?—

"I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen,
 A gate, I fear, I'll dearly rue;
 I gat my death frae twa sweet een,
 Twa lovely een o' bonie blue.

"Twas not her golden ringlets bright,
 Her lips like roses wat wi' dew,
 Her heaving bosom lily-white;—
 It was her een sae bonie blue."

This fair creature was Miss Jeffrey, daughter of the minister of Lochmaben. Many years after the bard had actually succumbed to worse assailants than the "twa sweet een," she, a widow in New York, but still retaining those orbs of blue in all their bewitching beauty, furnished a delightful reminiscence of his visits to the manse in "auld lang syne." "Many times," she said, "have I seen Burns enter my father's dwelling on a cold rainy night, after a long ride over the dreary moors. On such occasions one of the family

* As an evidence of the great respect entertained for both Mr. Gillespie and the fair object of his affection by Burns, he inscribed their names on the window of his parlour at Ellisland, the same window also having scratched upon it by the poet's hand his favourite line from Pope, "An honest man's the noblest work of God." On visiting the house last March, we were shocked to find that the poetic line and the names had been so deeply and closely scored, seemingly with a piece of flint, as to be rendered all but illegible. The writing constituted one of the chief attractions of the house, and its disgraceful obliteration must for ever be deplored.

would help to disencumber him of his dreadnought and boots, while others brought him a pair of slippers, and made him a warm cup of tea. It was during these visits that he felt himself perfectly happy, and opened his whole soul to us, repeated and even sang many of his admirable songs, and enchanted all who had the good fortune to be present with his manly, luminous observations and artless manner. I never could fancy that Burns had ever followed the rustic occupation of the plough, because everything he said had a gracefulness and charm that was in an extraordinary degree engaging."

Yet another of the poet's Dumfriesshire heroines remains to be noticed—"Lovely Polly Stewart." Her father was factor to the Rev. James Stuart-Menteth, Rector of Barrowby in Lincolnshire, who bought the estate of Closeburn from the Kirkpatrick's in 1783.* Burns met with Mr. Stewart on one occasion at Brownhill Inn, near Thornhill, which hostelry was kept by his sister and her husband, Mr. John Bacon;† and by way of honouring his arrival, the poet wrote three verses on a tumbler, the first of which runs thus—

"You're welcome, Willie Stewart,
You're welcome, Willie Stewart;
There's ne'er a flower that blooms in May,
That's half sae welcome's thou art."

The landlady, according to Lockhart, was very wroth at what she considered the disfigurement of her glass, and, in order to appease

* Dr. Ramage of Wallace Hall, Closeburn, a zealous antiquarian and man of letters, communicates to "Notes and Queries," fourth series, Vol. V., an interesting account of Mr. Stewart and his daughter Polly, from which we quote the following passage:—"Closeburn Hall had been destroyed by fire in 1754, and had never been rebuilt, so that there was no proper dwelling-house on the estate. The old castle, the keep of the Kirkpatrick's, and said to be the oldest inhabited house in Scotland, had been fitted up as a temporary abode; and here Mr. Stewart, on the removal of the old family, ensconced himself to look after the property and to watch the building of the new mansion which Mr. Menteth set about erecting. It was at this time that Burns seems to have been on intimate terms with Mr. Stewart, and used to visit him at the castle, where they were accustomed to sit late, and often see the sun below the horizon before the company dispersed. An old man, Robert Anderson (only lately dead), was the boy in attendance on the guests, and he said Burns never took more than his head could carry, and that the poet used to assist those less able to take care of themselves up the narrow stairs of the keep; and after he had seen them all safe in bed, would order Robert to bring out his pony and set off homewards."

† A Mr. Ladyman, an English commercial traveller, alighting one day at Brownhill Inn, found that he should have to dine with a company in which

her, a gentleman present payed down a shilling and carried off the relic, which eventually found its way to Abbotsford, the residence of Sir Walter Scott. Complimentary to the father, our poet paid a heartfelt homage to the daughter, who was just sixteen when he first felt the influence of her extraordinary charms. Devoutly did he pray that her lines might fall in pleasant places, that the darling of his verse might obtain a worthy husband. But his petition

“May he whose arms shall fauld thy charms,
Possess a leal and true heart;
To him be given to ken the heaven
He grasps in Polly Stewart”

seems to have been answered unfavourably. She was twice married, inauspiciously on the first occasion; her own imprudence led to a separation from her second husband; and when residing at Maxwelltown in 1806 she formed an acquaintance with a Swiss prisoner of war, in the French service, named Fleitz, with whom she went to the Continent. After his death the mind of “Lovely Polly” gave way, and, sad to tell, she died in an asylum at Florence in 1847.

Of Burns’s “howf” in Dumfries everybody has heard; and what the Globe Tavern was to him during his town life, Brownhill Inn was, though in a lesser degree, during his residence in upper Nithsdale. Sometimes, when out on his official rides, he made a lengthened stay at Mr. Bacon’s place of entertainment, and occasionally, when the labours of the day were over, or purposely abridged, he spent an evening there, drawing around him all the “right good fellows” of the country side. On one occasion he was told by one of the company that a young woman named Christina Kirkpatrick, who lived near at hand, was a delightful

was Robert Burns. The dinner at which the landlord, *Bacon*, presided, passed off well, the principal dish being the well-known namesake of the host. The man had retired for a few minutes to see after a fresh supply of toddy, when some one called upon Burns to give the young Englishman proof of his being really Burns the poet, by composing some verses on the spur of the moment; and it was with hardly an interval for reflection that the bard pronounced as follows:—

“At Brownhill we always get dainty good cheer,
And plenty of bacon each day in the year;
We’ve all things that’s nice and mostly in season;
But why always *Bacon*—come give me a reason?”

singer of his songs. Burns thereupon expressed a wish to see and hear this Nithsdale "lentie;" and, after the girl's natural "blateness" had been overcome, she made her appearance, and fascinated the bard by the way in which she lilted forth the products of his fancy. Kirsty was a songstress of Nature's own school, with a voice of great compass, a capital ear, and a heartfelt appreciation of the old national music. She was, moreover, wonderfully well versed for a rustic in historical matters; and it is said that her memory was so retentive that she could repeat sermons nearly verbatim years after she had heard them preached. The talents of this humble country lass were turned to good account by Burns. Though "weel faured" enough to captivate the heart of honest William Flint, a mason from the Highlands, she possessed no such perilous beauty as inspired the poet's lyre; but the songs that he penned in honour of Deborah Davies, Jean Lorimer, and his other heroines, were subjected by him to the ordeal of Kirsty Kirkpatrick's fine musical taste and rich voice, whereby he was able to detect and correct any harsh word or bad rhythm that might have crept into the verses.

Some little time after being introduced to Burns, Kirsty was married to Mr. Flint, and they commenced housekeeping in a small cottage, built with his own hands, that is still "to the fore," a few hundred yards above Closeburn village. Our poet, who was fond of all rural festivities, attended as one of the wedding guests. Right merrily were the revels kept up; and when, soon after the retirement of the young couple, a girl present, who could sing nearly as well as the bride, was asked to give a specimen of her vocal powers, she started "Highland Mary." The mirth of the company was checked by the plaintive strain, and its effect upon the morbid sensitiveness of Burns was pitiful to witness. Before the singer could finish the stanza that closes with the lines

"For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary,"

he started to his feet, prayed the young singer in God's name to forbear, then, hastening to the door of the wedding chamber, he knocked, and entreated the bridegroom to let the bride come "but" the house, and quiet his mind with a verse or two of "Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon." This rather untimely request was complied with, and, under the soothing influence of Kirsty Flint's vocalism, the poet regained his equanimity.

The late Professor Gillespie, when a schoolboy at Wallace Hall

Academy, was ear and eye-witness to one of the many conferences held by the great master of Scottish song with his village critic and exponent. He noticed Burns's horse tied by the bridle to the neck of a cottage door, and, listening at the window, and also looking in at times, he heard the mistress of the house, Christina Flint, singing with "a pipe of a most overpowering pitch," while the poet sat, an attentive hearer, in an arm-chair by the fireside. According to the Professor, she was very liberal with her singing, warbling away, "even to us laddies, 'There's nae luck about the house,' and 'Braw, braw lads o' Gala Water' most inimitably."

In course of time, "Willie Stewart," retiring from the Closeburn factorship, went to reside at Laught, one of the Duke of Buccleuch's farms, which he held on lease. During a visit paid to him by Burns, Mr. Stewart's ploughman called to say that he had a young child at the point of death, and asking his master to go down to the cottage and offer up prayer. Burns, on request, accompanied his friend to the house of mourning, in which he found many of the neighbours gathered, and he had no difficulty in discovering that an unseen Presence was there also, hovering over the pallet of the little sufferer. "Mr. Burns," said the tenant of Laught, "it's you that maun put up the prayer; ye can do a' thing o' that kind better than me." The poet, deeply affected by the hopeless aspect of the child and the grief of its parents, complied with the request. After the usual prelude, "Let us pray," said "with solemn air," he proceeded to lead the devotions of the company in language that touched the hearts of all. Before he closed, every one present was in tears, and some of the women, quite overcome, "lifted up their voices and wept." The manner in which the author of "The Cotter's Saturday Night" prayed for the ploughman's dying child made a deep impression at the time, and is spoken of as something wonderful in the district till this day. The anecdote was related to the two daughters of the poet's sister, Mrs. Begg, in August last, "who," says our informant,* "were

* Mr. John Coltart, a worthy parishioner of Closeburn. We are indebted to him for the two preceding anecdotes of Burns; and for the following further reminiscences. About the time that the poet died, his brother Gilbert came to Dinning farm in Closeburn: he was one of the first to commence the Ayrshire dairy system in the district, and his cheeses were so good that, when sold at Dumfries, they passed for Cheshire. He tenanted the farm about ten years, and then sublet it and went to Lanarkshire. One of his out-houses, on being repaired, was occupied by William Flint and his musical spouse for two years, during which time the poet's mother and Kirsty were often together. Mrs. Flint, who died within the last thirty

proud to hear of such a case, as they said people in general were apt to suppose that their uncle had no religion about him. But they had often heard their mother tell that, after their father's death, Robert was left in charge of the rest; and the ploughman at Mossiel stated that, while he remained there, Robert constantly 'took the Book' (conducted family worship), and that he never heard a minister using more sublime language than the poet employed on such occasions."

Enough for the present of Burns's acquaintances and heroines: let us turn again to the hero-bard himself, and see how he fares. While conferring immortality upon the latter, and creating a fund of inexhaustible enjoyment for his countrymen, he was oppressed with the consciousness that, struggle as he might with hands and brain, poverty would be his portion. How manfully he did labour we have already seen, yet we find him in January, 1791, dilating upon "the supreme curse of making three guineas do the business of five;" and, from his own experience, apostrophising poverty as the "half-sister of death" and "the cousin-german of hell." In the following April, by the fall of his horse under him, his right arm was broken; and about the same period his wife presented him with another son, who was named William Nicol. Now is the time, ye patrons of Burns, Commissioners of the Excise, and members of the Ministry, to step in and make the "three guineas" six, by either giving him a supervisorship, which he has well earned, or in some other way, commensurate with his services, and inoffensive to his delicacy, placing him above the dread of want; or, better still, securing to him "the glorious privilege of being independent." The farm he cannot cling to; another year's tenancy will bring him to ruin; and he resolves to give up his lease, that he may avoid bankruptcy. If, during this crisis of the poet's fate, a portion of the Government patronage, that was sometimes freely showered on dolts and boobies, had fallen to his lot, what thankfulness would he have felt for it; how creditable it would have been for "the heaven-born Minister" who then presided at the helm of affairs; how gratifying it would have proved to the poet's admirers then

years, told Mr. Coltart that old Mrs. Burns possessed a great fund of knowledge, and that, even in the way of ordinary conversation, she was very imaginative—"Meet nurse for a poetic child." The Flints, on leaving Dinning, removed a few hundred yards up the brae, to a small farm called Hatrees; and while William farmed the ground and drove cattle, Christina kept a school, which the Misses Begg attended when spending their youthful days at Dinning; and not a few of her pupils still survive.

and now ; and what a prosperous shape it might have given to his future destiny ! For four years or more he has been recognized as the greatest poet of his day, and at the end of that period his gauger-ship is rewarded by £70 a-year, instead of £50, as before ; his district being at the same time changed from Ellisland to Dumfries. Twenty pounds of additional salary to the great exciseman-poet ! Grateful he is, however, for the "small mercies" meted out to him, especially as they are magnified by the promise of future preferment ; and, sad at heart, yet still hopeful, he prepares to bid farewell to Ellisland, the scene of much connubial joy, the birth-place of his children, and of many deathless products of his heart and brain.

How thankful Burns was for this new appointment is shown in his Fourth Epistle to Mr. Graham, of Fintry, through whom it was obtained, and of whom he warmly speaks as "the friend of his life." After the necessary business arrangements had been completed, he seems to have recovered his serenity ; and we get rather a pleasant sketch of him late in the summer from the pen of Dr. Currie, at a time when two English gentlemen, who had before met with the poet in Edinburgh, paid him a visit.

On calling at the house they were told that he had walked out alongside the river. While searching for him a singular object attracted their attention. Standing on a rock that projected into the stream was a man busy rod-fishing, who had for dress a loose greatcoat, fixed round him by a belt, from which hung an enormous Highland broadsword, while a fox's skin made into a cap served for head-gear. The angler was none other than our poet, whom they had some difficulty in recognizing. Invited to share his hospitality, they dined on broth and boiled beef, with vegetables, of which they partook heartily. After dinner the bard frankly told his friends he had no wine to offer them—nothing better than Highland whisky, a bottle of which Mrs. Burns set on the board, together with the famous punch-bowl of black Inverary marble,* which the poet received as a present from his father-in-law. Burns brewed the toddy, inviting them to drink. The travellers were in haste, and, besides, the flavour of the whisky to their *southron* palates was scarcely tolerable, but the generous poet offered them his best, and his ardent hospitality they found it im-

* The bowl was formed of *lapis-ollaris*, the stone of which Inverary Castle is built, and it was fashioned by Mr. Armour. Eventually it fell into the hands of Mr. Hastie, M.P. for Paisley, who is said to have refused 300 guineas for it ; "a sum," says Robert Chambers (rather questionably), "that would have set Burns on his legs for ever."

possible to resist. Burns was in his happiest mood, and the charms of his conversation were altogether fascinating. He ranged over a great variety of topics, illuminating whatever he touched. He related the tales of his infancy and his youth; he recited some of the gayest and some of the tenderest of his poems; in the wildest of his strains of mirth he threw in some touches of melancholy, and spread around him the electric emotions of his mind. The Highland whisky improved in its flavour; the marble bowl was again and again emptied and replenished; the guests of our poet forgot the flight of time and the dictates of prudence: at the hour of midnight they lost their way in returning to Dumfries, and could scarcely distinguish it when assisted by the morning's dawn.

Mr. Miller, after taking back the lease of Ellisland, sold the farm to Mr. Morine, a neighbouring proprietor, for £2000. The stock and crop of the out-going tenant brought good prices, whereby he was enabled, not only to discharge all his liabilities, but to acquire a trifle of ready money with which to face the difficulties of his new position. Amid the bustle which preceded the "fitting," Burns wrote his magnificent battle-piece, "The Song of Death"—his last poetical production on the battle-ground of his own defeat. With a tearful eye he bade a final adieu to pleasant Ellisland, "leaving nothing there," says Allan Cunningham, "but a putting-stone, with which he had loved to exercise his strength, a memory of his musings that can never die, and £300 of his money sunk beyond redemption in a speculation from which all had augured happiness."

Here we drop the curtain; and when it is again raised we shall see how the poet looked as an adopted son and subject of the "Queen of the South."

CHAPTER II.—DUMFRIES.

SKETCH OF BURNS AS HE FIRST APPEARED IN DUMFRIES—HE IS MADE A FREEMAN AND BURGESS—MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE INHABITANTS IN BURNS'S TIME: THEIR POLISH, CONVIVIALITY, AND TORVISM—THE POET'S CONNECTION WITH THE DUMFRIES PUBLIC LIBRARY—HE ASSISTS IN SEIZING A SMUGGLING VESSEL, AND SENDS FOUR OF THE CAPTURED GUNS AS A PRESENT TO THE FRENCH CONVENTION—HE GETS HIMSELF INTO TROUBLE ON ACCOUNT OF HIS POLITICS—HE FALLS INTO DISFAVOUR—HIS PECUNIARY CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN AN INHABITANT OF THE TOWN.

TOWARDS the close of 1791, Dumfries could number among its citizens a man who had already made some noise in the world, and who came to be recognized as one of Scotland's most illustrious sons. His figure was remarkable; so that even a cursory observer must have at once seen that it was the outward framework of an extraordinary individual. Five feet ten inches in height, firmly built, symmetrical, with more of the roughness of a rustic than the polish of a fine gentleman, there was a something in his bearing that bespoke conscious pre-eminence; and the impress thus communicated was confirmed by his swarthy countenance, every lineament of which indicated mental wealth and power: the brow broad and high; the eyes like orbs of flame; the nose well formed, though a professional physiognomist would have said that it was deficient in force; the mouth impassioned, majestic, tender, as if the social affections and poetic muse had combined to take possession of it; and the full, rounded, dimpled chin, which made the manly face look more soft and lovable. When this new denizen of the burgh was followed from his humble dwelling in Bank Street to some favourite friendly circle where the news of the day or other less fugitive topics were discussed, his superiority became more apparent. Then eye and tongue exercised an irresistible sway: the one flashing with emotional warmth and the light of genius—now scathing with its indignant glances, anon beaming with benignity and love; the other tipped with the fire of natural eloquence, reasoning abstrusely, declaiming finely, discoursing delightfully, satirizing mercilessly, or setting the table in a roar with verses

thrown off at red heat to annihilate an unworthy sentiment, or cover some unlucky opponent with ridicule. Need it be said that these remarks apply to the ex-tenant of Ellisland, Robert Burns?

His first appearance in Dumfries was on the 4th of June, 1787, two months after the second edition of his poems had been published. He came, on invitation, to be made an honorary burgess; neither the givers nor the receiver of the privilege dreaming, at that date, that he was destined to become an inhabitant of the town. All honour to the Council that they thus promptly recognized the genius of the poet. Provost William Clark shaking hands with the newly-made burgess, and wishing him joy, when he presented himself in the veritable blue coat and yellow vest that Nasmyth has rendered familiar, would make a good subject for a painter able to realise the characteristics of such a scene. The burgess ticket granted to the illustrious stranger bore the following inscription:—"The said day, 4th June, 1787, Mr. Robert Burns, Ayrshire, was admitted burgess of this burgh, with liberty to exercise and enjoy the whole immunities and privileges thereof as freely as any other does, may, or can enjoy; who, being present, accepted the same, and gave his oath of burgess-ship to his Majesty and the burgh in common form." Whilst tenant of Ellisland, Burns became, by frequent visits to the town, familiarly known to its inhabitants. Soon after Martinmas, 1791, accompanied by Bonnie Jean, with their children, Robert, Francis, and William, he took up a permanent residence in the burgh, and there spent the remainder of his checkered life; so that Dumfries became henceforth inseparably associated with his latest years. He had just seen thirty-one summers when he entered upon the occupancy of three small apartments of a second floor on the north side of Bank Street (then called the Wee Vennel).* After residing

* Robert Chambers thus describes the accommodation of the poet's Bank Street premises:—"The small central room, about the size of a bed-closet, is the only place he has in which to seclude himself for study. On the ground floor immediately underneath, his friend, John Syme, has his office for the distribution of stamps. Overhead is an honest blacksmith, called George Haugh, whom Burns treats on a familiar footing as a neighbour. On the opposite side of the street is the poet's landlord, Captain Hamilton, a gentleman of fortune and worth, who admires Burns, and often asks him to a family Sunday dinner."—Vol. III., p. 266. Nearly all the contemporaries of Burns in Dumfries have passed away. Of the two or three who still remember him, one is John Brodie, now a veteran of 91 years. John, when a "callant," was often about the house in Bank Street, and used to run messages for "Jean." He distinctly recollects seeing the poet burning a "barrowful" of written papers soon after coming from Ellisland.

there about eighteen months, or, according to another account, two years and a half, he removed to a self-contained house of a higher grade in Mill Street, which became the scene of his untimely death in July, 1796.

What varying scenes of weal and woe, of social enjoyments, of literary triumphs, of worldly misery and moral loss, were crowded within the Dumfries experiences of the illustrious poet! There he suffered his severest pangs, and also accomplished many of his proudest achievements. If the night watches heard at times his sorrowful plaint, and the air of the place trembled for a moment with his latest sigh, it long burned and breathed with the immortal products of his lyre; and when the striking figure we have faintly sketched lay paralysed by death, its dust was borne to old St. Michael's, and the tomb of the national bard became a priceless heritage to the town for ever.

Dr. Burnside says of his parishioners, at the time when Burns became one of them:—"In their private manners they are social and polite; and the town, together with the neighbourhood a few miles around it, furnishes a society amongst whom a person with a moderate income may spend his days with as much enjoyment, perhaps, as in any part of the kingdom whatever."* Other evidence tends to show that the society of the burgh was more intellectual than that of most other towns of the same size in Scotland. Soon after Burns came to reside in it, various circumstances combined to make it more than at any former period, perhaps, a gay and fashionable place of resort. A new theatre was opened, which received liberal patronage from the upper classes of the neighbourhood;† several regiments were at intervals stationed in the burgh, the officers of which helped to give an aristocratic tone to its society; and the annual races in October always drew a concourse of nobles, squires, and ladies fair to the County town.

* MS. History of Dumfries.

† Burns, writing to his friend Nicol, under date, Ellisland, Feb. 2, 1790, says:—"Our theatrical company, of which you must have heard, leave us this week. Their merit and character are indeed very great, both on the stage and in private life, not a worthless creature among them; and their encouragement has been accordingly. Their usual run is from eighteen to twenty pounds a night; seldom less than the one, and the house will hold no more than the other. There have been repeated instances of sending away six and eight and ten pounds a night for want of room. A new theatre is to be built by subscription; the first stone is to be laid on Friday first to come. Three hundred guineas have been raised by thirty subscribers, and thirty more might have been got if wanted."

How the rein was given to fashionable dissipation and animal enjoyment, during the racing season, in these exuberant days, is graphically described by the *Dumfries Journal*. "The entertainments of the hunting, races, balls, and assemblies, by the Caledonian and the Dumfries and Galloway Hunts, being now over (October 30th, 1792), we embrace the earliest opportunity of informing the public that they have been conducted with the utmost propriety and regularity, and, we believe, have given general satisfaction. The sports of the field in the morning were equal to the wishes of the gentlemen of the chase; the diversions of the turf through the day afforded the highest satisfaction, not only to those immediately interested, but to thousands of spectators, and the performances of the stage in the evening gave high entertainment to crowds of genteel people collected at the Theatre. Lady Hopetoun's box on Thursday evening, being the play asked by the Caledonian Hunt, exhibited an assemblage of nobility rarely to be seen in one box in the theatres of the metropolis. Besides, the noblemen and gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt had drawn together almost all the genteel families in the three southern counties of Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, and Wigtown, and we believe it may be safely affirmed that there never was on any occasion such an assemblage of people distinguished for their rank, fortune, and elegance of manners seen in this place, or perhaps in any provincial town in Scotland. Besides the daily entertainments at the ordinaries, there was a ball and supper given by each of the Caledonian and Dumfries Hunts, which, for the number and distinguished rank of the company, the splendour of the dresses, the elegance and sumptuousness of the entertainments, the richness and variety of the wines, exceeded everything of the kind ever seen here."

Lest it should be thought that the local journalist, from a feeling of partiality, should be overcolouring the picture, let us see how it looked in the eyes of a comparative stranger. It so happened that Robert Heron, the topographical writer and historian, visited Dumfries in the very week of these festivities, and put upon record his impressions of the burgh.* "It is perhaps," he says, "a place of higher gaiety and elegance than any other town in Scotland of the same size. The proportion of the inhabitants who are descended from respectable families, and have received a liberal education, is greater here than in any other town in this part of the island. These give, by consequence, a more elevated and polished

* Observations made in a Journey through the Western Counties of Scotland, by R. Heron, 1792, Vol. II, pp. 72-76.

tone to the manners and general character of this city. The manner of living which prevails here is rather showy than luxurious. To be esteemed genteel, not to sit down to a board overloaded with victuals, is the first wish of every one." After sketching at greater length, in the same style, the normal condition of the burgh, he goes on to describe its holiday aspect. "Both the Dumfries and Galloway and the Caledonian Hunts," he says, "were assembled here at this time. Every inn and ale-house was crowded with guests. In the mornings the streets presented one busy scene of hair-dressers, milliners' apprentices, grooms and valets, carriages driving and bustling backwards and forwards. In the forenoon almost every soul, old and young, high and low, master and servant, hastened out to follow the hounds or view the races. At the return of the crowd they were all equally intent, with the same bustle and the same ardent animation, on the important concerns of appetite. The bottle, the song, the dance, and the card table, endeared the evening, and gave social converse power to detain and to charm till the return of morn. Dumfries itself could not afford ministers of pleasure enough for so great an occasion. There were waiters, pimps, chairmen, hair-dressers, and ladies, the priests and priestesses from all those more favourite haunts where Pleasure ordinarily holds her court. Not only all the gayer part of the neighbouring gentry were on this occasion assembled in Dumfries; but the members of the Caledonian Hunt had repaired hither from Edinburgh, from England, and from the more distant counties of Scotland. The gay of the one sex naturally drew together the gay and the elegant of the other. There was such a show of female beauty and elegance as, I should suppose, few country towns, whether in Scotland or England, are likely to exhibit on any similar occasion."

A gay, refined, intellectual town enough, truly; and quite suitable, therefore, as a place of sojourn for Burns, the sentimental bard. But inasmuch as it was fashionable, aristocratic, courtly, given up in no small measure to the idolatry of rank, and fanatically afraid of anything that could be called ungentleel or democratic, it was no congenial home for the man who dared to say—

“Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
 Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
 Though hundreds worship at his word,
 He's but a coof for a' that:
 For a' that, and a' that,
 His riband, star, and a' that,
 The man of independent mind,
 He looks and laughs at a' that.”

In another respect, the town was but too congenial to the poet's tastes and habits. "John Barleycorn," to use his own metaphor, bore potential sway within it. "The curse of country towns," says Robert Chambers, writing in 1852, "is the partial and entire idleness of large classes of the inhabitants. There is always a cluster of men living on incompetencies, and a greater number of tradesmen whose shop duties do not occupy half their time. Till a very recent period, dissipation in greater or less intensity was the rule, and not the exception, amongst these men; and in Dumfries, sixty years ago, this rule held good."* Thrown into company of this kind, sought after and lionized by all casual visitors, is it at all wonderful that a man of Burns's temperament should have often indulged too deeply? It was no disgrace then for either lords or commoners to fall drunk below the Bacchanalian board. More's the pity that poor Burns, so supreme in many things, was not superior to the jovial drinking customs of his day. Had he lived in a discreeter age, he would have been a better and happier man. Whilst the burgh had its full share of jovial fellows, who habitually caroused and sang, in a doubtful attempt "to drive dull care away," and called the marvellous gauger, nothing loath, to their assistance, he had frequent opportunities, which he willingly embraced, of breathing a purer atmosphere, and enjoying a higher communion than theirs. Burns was a man of many moods; he was mirthful and gloomy by turns; the pride and paragon of a refined circle at Woodley Park,† Friar's Carse, or Mavis Grove, one day; and on some not distant night, the hero of a merry group, fuddling madly in the Globe Tavern, singing in all tipsy sincerity the challenge of his own rollicking song:—

"Wha last frae aff his chair shall fa',
He is the king amang us three."

* Life and Works of Burns, Vol. III., p. 209.

† A fine old mansion, beautifully situated, four miles south-west of Dumfries, and originally called Holm. It belonged to Andrew Crosbie, the Whig ex-Provost of Dumfries, whom the Pretender carried off, in 1745, as one of the securities for the payment of money levied by him on the town. Mr. Crosbie's son was a distinguished advocate, the prototype of Counsellor Pleydell in Guy Mannering, and he spent much of his leisure at the family mansion. Afterwards the house was bought by a gentleman named Goldie, who called it Goldielea, a combination of his own name and that of his wife, who was called Leigh. Mr. Walter Riddel having become possessed of the house, named it Woodley Park in honour of his spouse, with whom, as has already been stated, Burns was on intimate terms.

At Ellisland, as we have seen, he had never lost the reputation of being a sober man, though he was fond of company and sometimes drank to excess. He indulged more frequently, however, when he ceased altogether to be a tiller of the soil, "turning down no more daisies," "binding" no more "after his reapers," tied to town-life and an uncongenial occupation. More exposed to temptations, and less able to resist their influence, he too often sank deeply in the mire; but he did not wallow in it. In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, we feel justified in stating that he never became habitually intemperate, or a lover of the bottle for its own sake. His extreme sociality often led him into excess: none can tell how often he drained the intoxicating cup in order to purchase a momentary forgetfulness of his disappointments and his cares. And when Burns sinned in these respects, how he did suffer! the very poetry of his nature giving a keener edge to his remorse.

" See Social Life and Glee sit down,
All joyous and unthinking,
Till quite transmogrified they've grown
Debauchery and Drinking."

One summer morning, while Burns, after an experience of this sad kind in the King's Arms, was proceeding homeward, he met with his neighbour, Mr. Haugh, who had risen to his work somewhat earlier than usual: "O, George!" said the poet, more penitent than elated, "you are a happy man; you have risen from a refreshing sleep, and left a kind wife and children; while I am returning like a condemned wretch to mine."

Dumfries had ceased to be the Whig town which it was during the troubles of 1745. When a cry arose in favour of Parliamentary reform, the municipal body voted addresses to the King against it, and brimful of devoted loyalty; and when news of the French Revolution reached the town, it excited a general feeling of alarm. Provost Staig and his colleagues looked upon the British Constitution as perfection itself, and their reverence for it was only equalled by their horror at the doings of the French democracy. In the following extracts from the *Dumfries Journal* we find the loyal, anti-democratic, and orthodox condition of the town faithfully mirrored. "On Tuesday, June 4th, 1793 [King George the Third's birth-day], an unusual display of loyalty eminently manifested itself through all ranks of people in this place. In addition to what we observed last week, it is but justice to notice the ardent loyalty of the rising generation, who,

having procured two effigies of Tom Paine, paraded with them through the different streets of this burgh; and at six o'clock in the evening consigned them to the bonfires, amid the patriotic applause of the surrounding crowd." After a general description of the enthusiastic mode in which the anniversary of his Majesty's birth-day was celebrated that year, special notice is taken by this sympathising journalist of the proceedings in which the gentlemen of the Loyal Native Club* manifested "their attachment to the best of sovereigns on this joyous day." This association, formed on the 18th of January, 1793, "for Preserving Peace, Liberty, and Property, and for Supporting the Laws and Constitution of the Country," included among its members many influential inhabitants, their president being Commissary Goldie, and their secretary, Mr. Francis Shortt, town-clerk. "A few ladies," we are told, "on the morning of the auspicious day, brought bandeaux of blue satin ribbon, embroidered by themselves with the words 'God save the King!'" which were presented in their name by the president to the members, and worn all day by the latter round their hats. "The club met at three o'clock afternoon, in the King's Arms Tavern, and after partaking of an elegant dinner, no less than fourteen loyal and well adapted toasts were drunk; and a fifteenth bumper toast of 'God bless every branch of the Royal Family!' was given by way of *finale* to this species of toasts. The club also drank bumpers to the loyal town of Dumfries, and to the magistrates; and in like manner to each of the ladies who had contributed so obligingly and attentively to the decoration of the members. At six o'clock the club adjourned in a body to the Town Hall, where they joined in the loyal and distinguished rejoicings which took place there in the evening. At eight o'clock they went to the assembly, and wore their bandeaux across their breasts."

Burns, unlike most of his fellow-townsmen, did not deplore the French Revolution; on the contrary, he heartily sympathised with it, and was not the man to conceal his sentiments on any question at the dictate of prudence. "He was," says Lockhart, "the standing marvel of the place; his toasts, his jokes, his epigrams, his songs, were the daily food of conversation and scandal; and he,

* Burns's impromptu satire on this club is well known:—

"Ye true, loyal natives attend to my song;
In uproar and riot rejoice the night long:
From envy and hatred your corps is exempt,
But where is your shield from the darts of contempt?"

open and careless, and thinking he did no great harm in saying and singing what many of his superiors had not the least objection to hear and applaud, soon began to be considered, among the local admirers of the good old King and his minister, as the most dangerous of all the apostles of sedition, and to be shunned accordingly.* A curious and characteristic illustration of the way in which the poet gave vent to his political views may here be recorded. A public library was opened in the burgh, towards the close of 1792; and Burns, who had assisted in establishing it, was admitted a member on the 5th of March, 1793; the minute of the proceedings stating that the committee had, "by a great majority, resolved to offer him a share of the library free of the usual admission money (10s. 6d.), out of respect and esteem for his merits as a literary man." Reciprocating this kindness, Burns, on the 30th of the same month, presented four books to the library—"Humphrey Clinker," "Julia de Roubigné," "Knox's History of the Reformation," and "De Lolme on the British Constitution."

The last-named volume contained a frontispiece portrait of the author, the back of which displayed these words, written in the poet's bold, upright hand:—"Mr. Burns presents this book to the library, and begs they will take it as a creed of British liberty till they find a better.—R. B." Very simple, innocent words in themselves; but awfully daring at that time, and excessively imprudent when proceeding from a Government officer. Burns, on reflection, quailed before the danger he had thus rashly incurred; and, hurrying next morning to the house of Mr. Thomson (afterwards provost of the town), with whom the books had been left, he expressed an anxious desire to see De Lolme, as he was afraid he had written something upon it "which might bring him into trouble." On the volume being produced, he, before leaving, pasted the fly-leaf to the back of the engraving, in order to seal up his seditious secret; but any one holding the double leaf up to the light may easily find it out, the volume being still in the library, and its value immeasurably enhanced by this inscription.

In the same library, now the property of the Dumfries and Maxwelltown Mechanics' Institution, there is another book, the thirteenth volume of Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland, which reveals another glimpse of the poet in Dumfries. Under the head "Balmaghie," a notice is given of several martyred Covenanters belonging to that parish, and the rude yet expressive

* Life of Burns, pp. 211-212.

lines engraved on their tombstones are quoted at length. The pathos of the simple prose statement, and the rugged force of the versification, seem to have aroused the fervid soul of Burns; for there appears, in his bold handwriting, the following verse pencilled on the margin by way of foot-note:—

“The Solemn League and Covenant
 Now brings a smile, now brings a tear;
 But sacred Freedom, too, was theirs:
 If thou’rt a slave indulge thy sneer.”

We had occasion, in December, 1859, to consult this volume; and, on discovering the lines, recognized the poet’s caligraphy at once, and had no difficulty in concluding that they constituted the first rough draft of his well-known epigram in praise of the League and the Covenant, quoted in a preceding chapter. The matured lines are usually represented as an impromptu rebuke by Burns to some scoffer at the Covenant; but this precious holograph demonstrates the real circumstances under which they were originated.

Burns identified himself by more than rash words with the democrats across the Channel. A vessel engaged in the contraband traffic from the Isle of Man having entered the Solway, was watched by a party of Excise officers, including the poet. She became fixed in the shallows, but her crew were so numerous and well-armed that the party durst not attempt her capture unaided; and Mr. Lewars, the poet’s friend and brother-excise-man, was sent to Dumfries for a guard of dragoons. Burns, with a few men under his orders, was meanwhile left on the look-out in a wet salt marsh; and as the time thus passed wearily away, Lewars was blamed by the impatient watchers for his seeming tardiness, one of them going as far as to wish that the devil had him in his keeping. Burns saw a humorous ingredient in the irreverent desire, and in a few minutes expanded it into the well-known ditty, “The Deil’s awa wi’ the Exciseman,” with which he diverted his colleagues till Lewars arrived with the soldiers. Our poet could, when occasion required, play the part of Captain Sword as well as Captain Pen. Putting himself at the head of the force, he waded sword in hand to the vessel’s side, and was the first to board her and call upon her lawless crew to surrender in the King’s name. Though outnumbering the assailing party, the smugglers quietly submitted. The vessel was condemned, and, with all her arms and stores, sold at Dumfries.

Had the matter ended here, the poet’s services might have

secured his promotion; but unfortunately he sinned them all away, by purchasing four of the captured carronades, and sending them, with a eulogistic epistle, as a present to the French Convention. The carronades and letter were intercepted at Dover; and forthwith the Commissioners of Excise ordered an inquiry to be made into the conduct of their officer. Burns, in a letter to his patron, Mr. Graham of Fintry, stated that he was "surprised, confounded, and distracted" on hearing of the threatened investigation. He warmly repudiated the interpretation put upon his behaviour, declared his devout attachment "to the British Constitution on Revolution principles;" and closed with the touching appeal: "I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which, with my latest breath, I will say I have not deserved."

It was long believed that the poet's official prospects were utterly blighted by the inquiry; and that, as a consequence, he became more dissipated and reckless. Some of his biographers have gone further, and attributed his early death to the same cause; but what says Burns's superior in the Dumfries Excise district, Mr. Findlater? In a letter on the subject, that gentleman says:—"I may venture to assert that when Burns was accused of a leaning to democracy, and an inquiry into his conduct took place, he was subjected in consequence thereof to no more than perhaps a verbal or private caution to be more circumspect in future. Neither do I believe his promotion was thereby affected, as has been stated. That, had he lived, would, I have every reason to think, have gone on in the usual routine. His good and steady friend, Mr. Graham, would have attended to this. What cause, therefore, was there for depression of spirits on this account? or how should he have been hurried thereby to a premature grave? I never saw his spirit fail till he was borne down by the pressure of disease and bodily weakness; and even then it would occasionally revive, and, like an expiring lamp, emit bright flashes to the last."

Besides, Burns, the very year before he died, actually officiated as a supervisor; and there is every reason to conclude that he would soon have been permanently promoted to that rank had not death intervened. Whilst we think that the charge against the Excise Board, of neglecting or ill-using Burns, is undeserved, we are decidedly of opinion that the treatment he received from the superiors of the Board and the Government of the day was infamous. It was a disgrace to them, and must ever be a source of the deepest regret to all admirers of the poet, ~~that~~

they allowed a few random specks of disaffection to rise up between them and the lustre of his genius; and that, too, when it was pervaded and intensified by the purest patriotism. When the war between Britain and France broke out, in 1793, Burns joined a volunteer company that was formed in Dumfries; and, according to the testimony of his commanding officer, Colonel De Peyster, he faithfully discharged his soldierly duties, and was the pride of the corps, whom he made immortal by his verse, especially by the vigorous address beginning—

“ Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
Then let the louns beware, sir;
There's wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, sir,
The Nith shall run to Corsincon,
And Criffel sink in Solway,
Ere we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally!”

Burns was the laureate of the company, “and in that capacity,” says Lockhart, “did more good service to the Government of the country, at a crisis of the darkest alarm and danger, than perhaps any one person of his rank and station, with the exception of Dibdin, had the power or the inclination to render.”

“His ‘Poor and Honest Soger,’” says Allan Cunningham, “laid hold at once on the public feeling; and it was everywhere sung with an enthusiasm which only began to abate when Campbell's ‘Exile of Erin’ and ‘Wounded Hussar’ were published. Dumfries, which sent so many of her sons to the wars, rung with it from port to port; and the poet, wherever he went, heard it echoing from house and hall. I wish this exquisite and useful song, with ‘Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,’ the ‘Song of Death,’ and ‘Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?’—all lyrics which enforce a love of country, and a martial enthusiasm into men's breasts—had obtained some reward for the poet. His perishable conversation was remembered by the rich to his prejudice: his imperishable lyrics were rewarded only by the admiration and tears of his fellow-peasants.”

In the spring of 1793, Burns addressed the following letter “To the Hon. the Provost, Bailies, and Town Council of Dumfries.” “Gentlemen,—The literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town has so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his *children* educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, to give my

young ones that education I wish, at the High School, fees which a stranger pays will bear hard upon me. Some years ago, your good town did me the honour of making me an honorary burghess. Will you allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far as to put me on the footing of a real freeman of the town in the schools? If you are so very kind as to grant my request, it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where I can officially serve; and will, if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honour to be, gentlemen, &c.,—ROBERT BURNS.* The request was at once complied with, to the great gratification of the poet, who was devotedly attached to his children, and desirous above all things to give them a liberal education. "In the bosom of his family," says Mr. Gray, one of the teachers in the Academy, "he spent many a delightful hour in directing the studies of his eldest son, a boy of uncommon talents. I have frequently found him explaining to this youth, then not more than nine years of age, the English poets from Shakespeare to Gray; or storing his mind with examples of heroic virtue, as they live in the pages of our most celebrated English historians. I would ask any person of common candour, if employments like these are consistent with habitual drunkenness."

But though not systematically intemperate, his habits were too lax and irregular for the community in which he lived, convivial

* "As to Burns," says Mr. Carruthers of Inverness, writing to us on the 27th of January, 1866, "I have one scrap for you. You will most likely print the short letter which the poet addressed to the Provost, Bailies, and Town Council of Dumfries, respecting the education of his children. The original draft of the letter, in Burns's handwriting, is in the British Museum; and when there lately, I copied a part of it which was omitted in publication. After the second paragraph of the printed letter, ending with the words, 'put me on the footing of a real freeman of the town' of Dumfries, there occurs this passage:—'That I may not appear altogether unworthy of the favour, allow me to state to you some little services I have lately done a branch of your revenue, the two pennies exigible on foreign ale vended within your limits. In this rather neglected article of your income, I am ready to show that within these last few weeks my exertions have secured for you of those duties nearly the sum of ten pounds; and in this, too, I am the only one of the Excise (except Mr. Mitchell, whom *you pay* for his trouble) who took the least concern in the business.' It will be worth your while seeing," continues Mr. Carruthers, "if the letter is preserved among the Town Council papers, whether Burns himself omitted the above passage (which is certainly not in good taste), or whether it was thrown out by Currie." We have been unable to discover the original, and suspect that the interesting question raised by our esteemed correspondent must continue to remain unanswered.

though it was; and many who disliked him on other grounds magnified his excesses, and made these a pretext for "sending him to Coventry." On one well-known occasion our errant poet received the cut direct from some of the patrician citizens. During an autumnal evening, in 1794, High Street was gay with fashionable groups of ladies and gentlemen, all passing down to a County ball in the Assembly Rooms.* One man, well fitted to be the cynosure of the party, passed up on the shady side of the thoroughfare, and soon found himself to be doubly in the shade. It was Burns. Nearly all knew him, but none seemed willing to recognize him; till Mr. David M'Culloch of Ardwell, noticing the circumstance, dismounted from the horse on which he rode, politely accosted the poet, and proposed that he should cross the street. "Nay, nay, my young friend," said the bard pathetically; "that's all over now!" and, after a slight pause, he quoted two verses of Lady Grizel Bailie's touching ballad:—

"His bonnet stood aince fu' fair on his brow,
His auld ane looked better than mony ane's new;
But now he lets't wear ony way it will hing,
And casts himsel' dowie upon the corn-bing.

"O! were we young, as we aince hae been,
We sud hae been galloping down on yon green;
And linking it over the lily-white lea;
And werena my heart light I wad dee."

This incident has been adduced as a proof that Burns at this period (admittedly the darkest in his career) had become an object of "universal rejection." Never was there a greater mistake; and it would be even wrong to suppose that the dejection that he felt, and expressed in Lady Grizel's verse, was more than momentary, or otherwise than semi-dramatic. One who is overcome by real heart distress does not seek to give it vent by measured poetical quotations. Half an hour after the rencontre, Burns and Mr. M'Culloch had some cheerful chit-chat over a glass of punch in the bard's own house, the latter having thoroughly recovered his spirits; and so charming was his discourse, and so sweetly did Bonnie Jean sing some of his recent effusions, that the Laird of Ardwell left the couple with reluctance to join his fashionable friends in Irish Street.

Mr. Gray, referring to the poet about this time, states that

* At the foot of the George Inn Close, Irish Street, and now occupied by *Mr. Gemmill* as an Academy.

though malicious stories were circulated freely against him, his early friends gave them no credit, and clung to him through good and bad report. "To the last day of his life," he says, "his judgment, his memory, his imagination, were fresh and vigorous as when he composed the 'Cotter's Saturday Night.' The truth is, that Burns was seldom intoxicated. The drunkard soon becomes besotted, and is shunned even by the convivial. Had he been so, he would not long have continued the idol of every party." We have the testimony of the poet's widow that her husband "never drank by himself at home," and that he still continued to attend church, two facts which, apart from other more decided evidence, tell against the stigma that he had become recklessly dissipated in his latest years.*

Burns's circumstances whilst in Dumfries were humble, but not poverty-stricken. His official income was £50, extra allowances usually bringing it up to £70; and his share in fines averaged an additional £10. "Add to all this," says Chambers, "the solid perquisites which he derived from seizures of contraband spirits, tea, and other articles, which it was then the custom to divide among the officers, and we shall see that Burns could scarcely be considered as enjoying less than £90 a year."†

If the poet would have accepted money payment for the glorious coinage of his fancy, he might easily have doubled this income or more; but, with a magnanimity which, however mistaken, illustrates the unselfishness of his nature, he steadily refused all offers of pecuniary reward for his lyrical productions. Of George Thomson's "Musical Miscellany" Burns was the chief minstrel, but he scorned to barter his melodious contributions for worldly gear, even when "one pound one he sairly wanted." Thomson having ventured to send some cash to the bard on one occasion, drew down upon himself this rebuke, dated July, 1793:—"I assure you, my

* When at Ellisland he went pretty often to Dunscore Church. In Dumfries he went to church frequently in the forenoon, went oftenest to Mr. Inglis's, the Dissenting clergyman. The family had one seat there. Sometimes went to St. Michael's Church, which the widow attended regularly.—Mrs. Burns's Memoranda in P. H. Waddell's Burns, Appendix, p. xxiii.—The pew in St. Michael's occupied by the poet and his family was situated in the south-west portion of the church. It was removed in 1869, when the lower part of the venerable fabric was re-seated. It is in the possession of Mrs. Colonel Campbell, daughter of the late Professor James Buchanan, of Edinburgh, by whom it was purchased for £7 10s., and it is now at that lady's residence, Hetland, Dumfriesshire.

† Life and Works of Burns, Vol. IV., p. 124.

dear Sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of affectation; but as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear by that HONOUR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS'S INTEGRITY, on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the bypast transactions, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you."

According to the testimony of the bard's eldest son, given to Mr. Chambers, and amply corroborated by others, the house in Mill Street was of a good order, such as were occupied at that time by the better class of burgesses; and his father and mother led a life that was comparatively genteel. "They always had a maid-servant, and sat in their parlour. That apartment, together with two bedrooms, was well furnished and carpeted; and when good company assembled, which was often the case, the hospitable board which they surrounded was of a patrician mahogany. There was much rough comfort in the house, not to have been found in those of ordinary citizens; for, besides the spoils of smugglers, as above mentioned, the poet received many presents of game and country produce from the rural gentlefolk, besides occasional barrels of oysters from Hill, Cunningham, and other friends in town; so that he possibly was as much envied by some of his neighbours, as he has since been pitied by the general body of his countrymen."*

* Life and Works of Burns, Vol. IV., p. 125.

CHAPTER III.—DUMFRIES.

NOTICE OF BURNS'S CHIEF PRODUCTIONS WHILST RESIDING IN THE TOWN, OF THE LOCALITIES ASSOCIATED WITH HIM, AND OF THE PERSONS COMMEMORATED IN HIS POEMS—HIS EVERY-DAY LIFE IN THE BURGH—HIS LAST ILLNESS—HE GOES TO BROW ON THE SEA-SIDE IN A VAIN SEARCH FOR HEALTH—ANECDOTES OF HIS SOJOURN THERE—DEATH OF THE BARD—HIS FUNERAL—HIS WIDOW AND CHILDREN—ERECTION OF A MAUSOLEUM OVER HIS GRAVE—EXHUMATION AND REBURIAL OF HIS REMAINS—OPENING OF THE MAUSOLEUM VAULT AT THE FUNERAL OF MRS. BURNS—A CAST TAKEN FROM THE SKULL OF THE POET.

AMID all Burns's changes of mood and condition the Muse never long deserted him; and were he tested by his productions in Dumfries, exclusive of his previous poems, he would still be recognized as our greatest lyrical bard. Indeed, considering the time absorbed in the faithful performance of his work as an exciseman, and of his family duties, and the time spent by him in company, good, bad, or indifferent, we cannot but wonder at the teeming wealth which his mind disclosed during his latest years.

Fully a hundred songs are the fruit of this period, the list including his most humorous ditties, many of his finest amatory effusions, and all his best battle lyrics. "Willie Wastle," "Auld Rob Morris," and "Duncan Gray," are referable to it; so are "Contented wi' little and cantie wi' mair," "Cauld kail in Aberdeen," "Meikle thinks my luvie o' my beauty," "Ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?" "What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?" and "Last May a braw wooer cam doon the lang glen." With these mirth-moving creations mingle many pervaded by the soul of pathos, and which one can scarcely name without tearful emotion, such as, "Thou hast left me ever, Jamie," "The lovely lass o' Inverness," "O mirk, mirk is this midnight hour," "My heart is sair, I daurna tell," "How lang and dreary is the night," "Here awa', there awa', wandering Willie," "Farewell! thou stream that winding flows," "Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon," "Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy," "Ae fond kiss, and then we sever," "O wert thou

in the cauld blast, on yonder lea, on yonder lea." Then, what images of female beauty, warm heart-affection, and pictures of rural life, are suggested by the mere titles of others on the list:—"Lovely Polly Stewart," "The lassie wi' the lint-white locks," "The fairest maid on Devon's bank," "My wife's a winsome wee thing;" with other heroines, to whom the poet promises, "I'll meet you on the lea rigg;" or petitions, "Wilt thou be my dearie?" or depicts, whilst mixing up other congenial ideas in the verse, "Sae flaxen were her ringlets," "O wat ye wha's in yon toun?" "Flow gently, sweet Afton," "'Twas na her bonie blue een was my ruin," "My love is like a red, red rose," "Love will venture in where it daurna weel be seen," "Yestreen I had a pint o' wine, a place where body saw na'." The catalogue of soft, tender, amatory effusions is enriched also by "The braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes," "There was a lass and she was fair," "True-hearted was he, the sad swain of the Yarrow," and others having a sprightlier air, such as, "My wife's a winsome wee thing," and "O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad." Sparkling with surpassing brilliancy in this galaxy of song are the charming patriotic ballad of "The Soldier's Return;" the noble martial ode, "Bruce's Address;" the lay in which love and patriotism blend beautifully together, "Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon;" the proud lyric of the honest man, though poor, "A man's a man for a' that;" and the best exponent of what Scotchmen feel towards friends, home, and country, "Auld Langsyne."

Such are a few of the matchless songs composed by Burns in his little chamber in Bank Street; in his more stylish parlour or closet in the street since honoured with his name; on the Dock meadow, "adown winding Nith," along the side of the river towards Martinton-ford, or among the ruins of Lincluden Abbey on the opposite bank. While thus employed, he was not only fulfilling his chief mission as a poet, but performing a great moral work. Many a line was written by Burns which, "dying he might wish to blot;" but, let it be borne in mind to his everlasting honour, that he blotted from the book of Scottish Song many foolish and licentious pieces, and that, after divorcing his country's airs from improper company, he matched them with verses that are in every way worthy of such glorious music.

All the localities in Dumfries, as elsewhere, mentioned in the poet's verse, acquired an interest, however commonplace before—such is the influence of genius; and many scenes or objects in *themselves* sweet, look more lovely since he sang their praise.

The river that flows past the town was always picturesque; but it seems a finer stream since the words of Burns were penned—

“ Adown winding Nith I did wander,
Of Phillis to muse and to sing;”

and these other lines,

“ As on the banks o’ wandering Nith,
Ae smiling simmer morn I strayed,
And traced the bonie howes and haughs,
Where linties sang and lambkins play’d;”

and since he declared that, as compared with the proudly-swelling Thames,

“ Sweeter far’s the Nith to me,
Where Comyns since had high command.”

The huge hill that overlooks the river’s conflux with the sea appears to rear a loftier crest since he patriotically protested that before an invading foe should be allowed to desecrate our shores,

“ The Nith shall rin to Corsincon,
And Criffel sink in Solway;”

and Tobias Bachup’s rare old spire was more than ever taken from the category of ordinary buildings, when the loyal bard doomed King George’s enemies to

“ Hang as high’s the Steeple.”*

Even the King’s Arms Inn was no longer quite prosaic, after one of its window panes had scratched upon it the well-known epigram of the gifted and sometimes irreverent gauger—

“ Ye men of wit and wealth, why all this sneering
’Gainst poor excisemen? Give the cause a hearing.
What are your landlords’ rent-rolls? Taxing ledgers!
What premiers, what? even monarchs’ mighty gaugers!
Nay, what are priests, those seeming godly wise men?
What are they, pray, but spiritual excisemen?”

The Parliamentary elections for the Dumfries Burghs acquired more than a political or local interest as soon as he etherialized them, and rendered the Five Carlins classical by his famous

* This is the Mid-Steeple in High Street, built in 1707, from a design by Mr. Tobias Bachup of Alloa.

ballad regarding a contest in 1790, when the two rival candidates* sought to curry favour with "Maggy by the banks o' Nith," "Blinkin' Bess o' Annandale," "Whisky Jean," "Black Joan," and "Marjory o' the mony lochs," than whom

" Five wighter carlins werna foun'
The South countrie within."

"Yon roofless tower," the ruined Lincluden Abbey or "Auld College," seems more eerie and romantic since Burns described his nocturnal "vision" beside its shattered walls:—

" By heedless chance I turned mine eyes,
And, by the moonbeam, shook to see
A stern and stalwart ghaist arise,
Attir'd as minstrels wont to be.

Had I a statue been o' stane,
His darin look had daunted me ;
And on his bonnet grav'd was plain,
The sacred posy—Libertie."

And the honoured Nithsdale family get fresh lustre from the "welcome home" which he gave them—

" The noble Maxwells and their powers
Are coming o'er the border,
And they'll gae bigg Terreagle's towers
An' set them a' in order.
And they declare Terreagle's fair,
For their abode they choose it ;
There's no a heart in a' the land
But's lighter at the news o't."†

It would have been well for the bard if he had had no drinking

* James Johnstone of Westerhall, the "Border Knight," and Captain Miller, younger of Dalswinton, the "Sodger Lad." "The Laddies by the Banks o' Nith" and "Epistle to Mr. Graham of Fintry" were written on the same contest; it ended in the defeat of Johnstone, the Tory candidate. Three other Election Ballads were written by Burns after he went to Dumfries, two of them respecting a contest for the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, in which the candidates were Mr. Heron, of Heron and Kerrouchtrie, Whig, and Mr. Gordon, of Balmaghie, Tory; and a third on a contest for the same seat between Mr. Heron and the Hon. Montgomery Stewart, which resulted in the return of the former, but he was unseated on petition.

† The small poem from which this extract is taken was written when Lady Winifred Maxwell, descended from the forfeited Earl of Nithsdale, returned to Scotland, and rebuilt Terregles House, three miles distant from Dumfries. *In the old mansion* which it superseded, Mary Queen of Scots rested for a

“howf” like the Globe, with its syren-servant, Anna of the “gowden locks;” * but who without emotion can visit this famous Dumfries tavern—once too familiar with his presence, and often vocal with his song; or sit in the old-fashioned chair, that still continues in “Burns’s corner,” and trace his charming lines on the window of its upper parlour—

“O lovely Polly Stewart,
O charming Polly Stewart,
There’s not a flower that blooms in May
That’s half so fair as thou art.” †

night after her defeat at Langside; and a portion of the bed she occupied is still preserved at the seat of the Maxwells. Mrs. Burns says, in her memoranda, that during the Ellisland period Burns dined once or twice at Terregles House, that the family lived in great style, and she recollects of her husband talking with wonder of the number of wax candles he had seen lighted at supper. Lady Winifred had a great liking for the poet, and called once at the house in Bank Street. She presented him with a splendid snuff box, of oriental manufacture, on the lid of which was a likeness of Queen Mary from an original portrait. When William Nicol Burns went to India he took the box with him, and it was unfortunately broken to pieces soon after he landed.

* “Annie wi’ the gowden locks” was Helen Ann Park, barmaid at the Globe, and niece to its landlady, Mrs. Hyslop. Burns’s admiration of her was more than Platonic. During a visit paid by his wife to Mauchline, he contracted a discreditable *liaison* with the girl, which resulted in the birth of a daughter. Mrs. Burns adopted the child as a “neighbour’s bairn,” and it was rocked in the same cradle with her own infant. Elizabeth Burns, as she was called, grew up to be one of the bonniest lasses of the town, and, when woman-grown, was wedded to a soldier named Thomson. She is now, we believe, residing, as a widow, at Pollokshaws, in Renfrewshire.

† In some of the editions of Burns’s Poems, the subjoined verse is given as one of his inscriptions on a window of the Globe:—

“The grey-beard, Old Wisdom, may boast of his treasures,
Grant me with gay Folly to live.
I grant him his calm-blooded, time-settled pleasures;
But Folly has raptures to give.”

Mr. David Dunbar, Dumfries, a great admirer of the poet, possesses a pane of glass on which the following four lines of the charming lyric, “Sae flaxen were her ringlets,” are inscribed in the unmistakable calligraphy of the poet:—

“Her’s are the willing chains of love,
By conquering beauty’s sovereign law,
But still my Chloris’ dearest charm,
She says she lo’es me best of a’.”

An attestation in these terms accompanies the relic:—“The above manuscript, from the hand of the immortal Burns, written on a pane of glass on

Preserved in the amber of his imperishable verse are the names of many persons—some to honour, others to shame—most of which would have been utterly forgotten save for their casual association with his own. When Provost Staig's daughter recovered from a fever under the care of a distinguished Dumfries physician, he canonized the lady in the following lines:—

“Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny.
You save fair Jessie from the grave!
An angel could not die.”

While the same fair lady was being wooed by the swain whom she afterwards wedded—Major William Miller, younger of Dal-swinton, Burns again complimented her, and commemorated the courtship in the charming lyric which begins—

“True-hearted was he, the sad swain o' the Yarrow,
And fair are the maids on the banks o' the Ayr;
But by the sweet side o' the Nith's winding river,
Are lovers as faithful, and maidens as fair:
To equal young Jessie, seek Scotland all over;
To equal young Jessie, you seek it in vain;
Grace, beauty, and elegance fetter her lover,
And maidenly modesty fixes the chain.”

And when another Jessie, Miss Lewars, proved a “ministering angel” to him whilst suffering from his last illness, he expressed his gratitude, and performed for her a similar service, by making her the subject of some of his sweetest lyrics and of his best impromptus. Taking up a crystal goblet containing wine and water, he wrote upon it the following toast, and then presented to her the brimming chalice:—

“Fill me with the rosy wine,
Call a toast, a toast divine;
Give the poet's darling flame,
Lovely Jessie be the name:
Then thou mayest freely boast,
Thou hast given a peerless toast.”

On Miss Lewars complaining of indisposition, Burns, with the pleasantry which rarely forsook him, said that to provide for the

one of the windows of the Globe Inn, Dumfries, is presented by John Thomson, writer in Lockerbie, to Mr. John Spiers, Glasgow, in token of his *friendship and regard*, 15th Sept., 1824.”

worst, he would furnish her with an epitaph as companion to the toast:—

“Say, sages, what’s the charm on earth
Can turn Death’s dart aside?
It is not purity and worth,
Else Jessie had not died.”

And when she recovered a little, the poet, saying there was “a poetic reason for it,” wrote as follows:—

“But rarely seen since Nature’s birth,
The natives of the sky;
Yet still one seraph’s left on earth,
For Jessie did not die.”*

John Bushby of Tinwald-Downs, who raised himself from humble circumstances to wealth and position, first as a solicitor and then as a banker in Dumfries, was long on friendly terms with Burns; but a quarrel between them brought down upon his head some bitter diatribes, which he scarcely merited; and it would have been better every way had “black-lippit Johnnie” never been made to figure in the poet’s pages. More creditable to Burns are the epigrams by which he has rendered John Syme of Ryedale famous. Mr. Syme is still well remembered in the town as a fine specimen of the old Scottish gentleman, clear-headed, warm-hearted, well-cultivated, courteous, full of anecdote and wit; and, as the fashion then went, devoted to the pleasures of the table, which he never relished so much as when Burns was his cronie. With them was sometimes associated Dr. William Maxwell of Dumfries; † though, when the trio met, it was generally less as

* Miss Lewars was afterwards married to Mr. James Thomson, writer, Dumfries. She died in 1855, at the age of seventy-seven, and lies interred in the immediate vicinity of the mausoleum.

† Burns’s fervid, emotional nature, strong sense of nationality, and, let us add, *animus* against the Presbyterian clergy, made him at times a Jacobite; and his abhorrence of arbitrary rule, his sense of justice, and respect for man’s natural rights, conspired to make him almost a Jacobin. His friend, Dr. Maxwell, had also sympathies of the same seemingly conflicting nature. A son of the gallant Kirkconnell Maxwell, who went out with Prince Charles in 1745, and became the historian of his expedition, he had a hereditary tendency towards Jacobitism; but, when studying medicine in France, he caught the revolutionary spirit that was rampant there in 1793, and ever afterwards retained the impression which it produced upon his ardent, youthful mind. A more congenial companion Burns could not have possessed, and no doubt Maxwell’s masculine intellect exercised a large amount of influence over the poet. In a notice of Dr. Maxwell’s death,

“three merry boys” than as the leading Whigs of the place (for as such they were recognized), to discuss politics over a brimming bowl. Among Burns’s happiest impromptus were those addressed by him to his friend Mr. Syme. On the poet sending a dozen of porter from the Jerusalem Tavern to Ryedale, he accompanied his present with the lines :—

“ O, had the malt thy strength of mind,
Or hops the flavour of thy wit,
’Twere drink for first of human kind,
A gift that e’en for Syme were fit.”

On one occasion, when Burns was about to take leave of his host at Ryedale, he was pressed to take another glass ; and he forthwith wrote on the tumbler an answer of consent:—

“ There’s death in the cup—sae beware !
Nay, more—there is danger in touching ;
But wha can avoid the fell snare ?
The man and his wine’s sae bewitching !”

Towards the close of 1795, the poet, when suffering from declining health, wrote in a less mirthful mood, and paid Syme the finest compliment of all, by declining a tempting invitation to dinner at Ryedale, in the following terms :—

“ No more of your guests, be they titled or not,
And cook’ry the first in the nation ;
Who is proof to thy personal converse and wit,
Is proof to all other temptation.”

A man of rare worth, Colonel Arentz Schulyer de Peyster, of Mavis Grove, finds merited commemoration in the poet’s verse. After honourable service in North America, he retired to Dumfries, the native town of Mrs. De Peyster ; and at the stormy period of the French Revolution he turned his military talents to account, by embodying and training the 1st Regiment of Dumfries Volun-

which appeared in the *Dumfries Times* of 22nd October, 1834, it is remarked :—“ His intimacy with Burns, whose friend as well privately as professionally he was, and of whose last illness he was a faithful and affectionate soother in both capacities, has in some measure rendered the name of Maxwell literary property ; while the liberal principles of the deceased, his visit to Paris during the early days of the first Revolution, and the well-known denouncement of him and his presumed designs by Burke, gave him a permanent place in the political history of the country.” It was to this gentleman that Burns, when on his death-bed, presented a pair of pistols as a memorial of their friendship.

teers, of which Burns was a member. "In his person he was tall, soldier-like, and commanding; in his manners easy, affable, and open; in his affections warm, generous, and sincere."* He died in 1822, at the advanced age of ninety-six years or more, regretted by the entire community. The reader will recollect the rhymed epistle which Burns, early in 1796, sent to his commander in answer to some kind inquiries regarding his health. No better thing of the kind has the bard produced than the letter beginning—

" My honoured Colonel, deep I feel
Your interest in the poet's weal;
Ah! how sma' heart hae I to speel
The steep Parnassus,
Surrounded thus by bolus pill,
And potion glasses."

When John Maxwell of Munches,† the greatest agricultural improver of his time near Dumfries, attained to his seventy-first birth-day, Burns closed a complimentary address to him with six lines, which have as much of the bard's peculiar manner as any other product of his muse within so small a compass:—

"Farewell, auld birkie—Lord be near ye!
And then the Devil he daurna steer ye;
Your friends aye lo'e, your foes aye fear ye:
For me, shame fa' me,
If neist my heart I dinna wear thee,
While Burns they ca' me."

In Burns's time the principal brewer at Dumfries was Mr. Gabriel Richardson (provost of the town in 1802 and 1803). Between the poet's family and that of Mr. Richardson there was a good deal of intimacy, and the eldest sons of both were sent on the same day to Mr. Gray's grammar school together. The provost's son grew up and became a great traveller and naturalist;‡ but, as we have heard him humorously stating, the first notable expeditions he ever made were on the back of the quadruped that

* *Dumfries Courier*.

† "Mr. Maxwell," says Robert Chambers, "was grandson's grandson to the Herries of Queen Mary's day. One cannot learn without a pleasing kind of surprise, that a relation in the fifth degree of one who was Warden of the West Marches in 1544, should have lived to the close of the French revolutionary war, which was the case of Mr. Maxwell, for he died in June, 1814."—*Life and Works of Burns*, Vol. III., p. 205.

‡ Sir John Richardson, born at Nith Place, Dumfries, in 1787, died in 1865.

drove a small cotton mill then in full activity at Dumfries, and which Burns notices as follows in a letter to the lady of Woodley Park:—"There is a species of the human genus that I call *the gin-horse class*: what enviable dogs they are! Round, and round, and round they go. Mundell's* ox that drives his cotton mill is their exact prototype: without an idea or a wish beyond their circle—fat, sleek, stupid, patient, contented; while here I sit altogether Novemberish, a *mélange* of fretfulness and melancholy—not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor." Burns long predeceased Mr. Gabriel Richardson; but he kept the memory of a worthy man green by writing his epitaph beforehand:—

"Here brewer Gabriel's fire's extinct,
And empty all his barrels:
He's blest—if as he brew'd he drink—
In upright, honest morals."

The poet's daily life in Dumfries is very graphically and fairly described by Robert Chambers in the following passage:—"So existence flows on with Burns in this pleasant southern town. He has daily duties in stamping leather, gauging malt-vats, noting the manufacture of candles, and granting licenses for the transfer of spirits. These duties he performs with fidelity to the king, and not too much rigour to the subject. As he goes about them in the forenoon, in his respectable suit of dark clothes, and with his little boy Robert perhaps holding by his hand and conversing with him on his school exercises, he is beheld by the general public with respect, as a person in some authority, the head of a family, and also as a man of literary note; and people are heard addressing him as Mr. Burns—a form of his name which is still prevalent in Dumfries. At a leisure hour before dinner he will call at some house where there is a piano—such as Mr. Newall, the writer's—and there have some young Miss to touch over for him one or two of his favourite Scotch airs, such as the 'Souter's Daughter,' in order that he may accommodate it to some stanzas that have been humming through his brain for the last two or three days. For another half-hour he will be seen standing at the head of some cross street, with two or three young fellows—bankers' clerks or

* This was Dr. Mundell, who, on retiring from professional service in the Royal Navy, started, in company with some other gentleman, a cotton factory, which flourished for a number of years, till it was injured by the war with America. He was uncle to the present Mr. Mundell of Bogrie.

'writer chiefs' commencing business—whom he is regaling with sallies of his bright but not always innocent wit; indulging there, indeed, in a strain of conversation so different from what had passed in the respectable elderly writer's mansion, that though he were not the same man, it could not have been more different. Later in the day he takes a solitary walk along the Dock Green by the river side, or to Lincluden, and composes the most part of a new song: or he spends a couple of hours at his folding-down desk, between the fire and window in his parlour, transcribing in his bold round hand the remarks which occur to him on Mr. Thomson's last letter, together with some of his own recently composed songs. As a possible variation upon this routine, he has been seen passing along the old bridge of Devorgilla Baliol, about three o'clock, with his sword-cane in his hand, and his black beard unusually well-shaven, being on his way to dine with John Syme at Ryedale, where young Mr. Oswald of Auchencruive is to be of the party—or may be in the opposite direction, to partake of the luxuries of John Bushby at Tinwald-Downs. But we presume a day when no such attraction invades. The evening is passing quietly at home, and pleasant-natured Jean has made herself neat, and come in at six o'clock to give him tea—a meal he always takes. The post comes into Dumfries at eight o'clock at night. There is always a group of gentlemen on the street eager to hear the news. Burns saunters out to the High Street, and waits among the rest. The intelligence of the evening is very interesting. The Convention has decreed the annexation of the Netherlands, or the new treason bill has passed the House of Lords, with only the feeble protest of Bedford, Derby, and Lauderdale. These things merit some discussion. The trades lads go off to strong ale in the closes; the gentlemen slide in little groups into the King's Arms Hotel or the George.

"As for Burns, he will just have a single glass, and a half-hour's chat beside John Hyslop's fire [at the Globe Tavern], and then go quietly home. So he is quickly absorbed in the little narrow close where that vintner maintains his state. There, however, one or two friends have already established themselves, all with precisely the same virtuous intent. They heartily greet the bard. Meg or John bustles about to give him his accustomed place, which no one ever disputes. And somehow the debate on the news of the evening leads on to other chat of an interesting kind. Then Burns becomes brilliant, and his friends give him the applause of their laughter. One jug succeeds another—mirth

abounds—and it is not till Mrs. Hyslop has declared that they are going beyond all bounds, and she positively will not give them another drop of hot water, that our bard at length bethinks him of returning home, where Bonnie Jean has been lost in peaceful slumber for three hours, after vainly wondering ‘what can be keeping Robert out so late the night.’ Burns gets to bed a little excited and worn out, but not in a state to provoke much remark from his amiable partner, in whom nothing can abate the veneration with which she has all along regarded him. And though he beds at a latish hour, most likely he is up next morning between seven and eight,* to hear little Robert his day’s lesson in *Cæsar*; or, if the season invites, to take a half-hour’s stroll before breakfast along the favourite Dock Green.”†

Early in January, 1796, the poet’s stay at the Globe was protracted far into the morning. There was a fell frost in the air, and a deep snow on the ground, as he passed up the close on his homeward way. Hours elapsed, however, before he reached home. Affected by the liquor he had taken, and the freezing cold of the atmosphere, a drowsiness—dread prelude of the sleep of death—overpowered him, and he lay long insensible at the head of the close, where it joins with Shakespeare Street. He had been suffering previously from what Dr. Currie calls “an accidental complaint,” which, with the strong medicine given to counteract it, disarmed his constitution, so that the merciless air of the month which, thirty-seven years before, “blew handsel in on Robin,” pierced through his frame with unresisted and fatal influence. But for this casual incident, the thread of his existence might possibly have been much prolonged; and better fortune was in store for him had he lived to enjoy it. The political ferment from which he suffered had subsided; he was acquiring a higher social position—was no longer a suspected person—was in the fair way of obtaining professional advancement—and was being consoled, in some degree, for present poverty by rich foretastes of future fame, which must have been most welcome balm to his proud and wounded spirit. Burns was never fairly himself after that dreadful morning, though, swan-like, he kept singing under the shadow of death.

* The time should have been a little later. Burns had full sympathy with the sentiment of the old song—

“Up in the morning’s no for me,
Up in the morning early.”

† Life and Works of Burns, Vol. IV., pp. 130-132.

In a letter addressed some time afterwards to his kind friend and patroness, Mrs. Dunlop, he says—"I have lately drank deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful; until, after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my door in the street." What an object of interest to his sympathising neighbours—the invalided poet, leaning painfully on his staff, yet glad to get a glimpse of the blue heavens once more, and to feel the radiance of the sun, however faint.

Some time in the following month of March, Miss Grace Aiken, daughter of Burns's early patron, Mr. Robert Aiken, of Ayr, when proceeding along the streets of Dumfries to visit her friend Mrs. Coupland, passed by a tall, gaunt, rather slovenly-looking person of sickly aspect, who uttered an exclamation which made her pause. The voice was the voice of Burns, but the figure seemed to her that of quite another man: so altered was he since, ten years before, she had seen him at her father's house. On being urgently solicited to accompany her to the residence of Mrs. Coupland, Burns consented, and there conversed with Miss Aiken and their hostess of other and happier days spent on the banks of Ayr and Doon. Spring came and went without bringing any relief to the doomed bard; and summer found him lying almost hopelessly prostrate in a humble cottage at Brow, ten miles from Dumfries, on the shores of the Solway, whither he had gone in search of health.*

* He had some intervals of better health, during one of which, in the middle of April, he was present at a meeting of the St. Andrew's Mason Lodge to which he belonged. The record of the Lodge contains the following among its entries: 25th Dec., 1791—Burns present. 6th Feb., 1792—Burns present. Philip Ditcher, Esq., of 3rd Regiment of Dragoons, now quartered at Dumfries, admitted apprentice. 14th March, 1792—Burns present. Chas. Pye, Captains Walker, Watson, and Pearslow, of 3rd Regiment of Dragoons, all admitted as apprentices. 31st May, 1792—Burns present. 5th June, 1792—Burns present. Ed. Andrews, of the Dragoons, and John Syme, Esq., of Barncaulzie, admitted brethren without fees. 22nd Nov., 1792—Burns present. 30th Nov., 1792—Burns present, and elected Senior Warden. 30th Nov., 1793—Burns present as Senior Warden. Sam. Clarke, jun., admitted a member. His name does not appear again till 29th Nov., 1794, and only twice long afterwards, as follows: 28th Jan., 1796—on which night Mr. James Georgeson, merchant in Liverpool, appeared, and who, being recommended by Brother Burns, was admitted apprentice; 14th April, 1796, the last minute in which the poet's name occurs.

Before proceeding thither he told Mrs. Burns that he thought he was dying, adding the remarkable words—"Don't be afraid; I'll be more respected a hundred years after I am dead than I am at the present day." On Monday, the 4th of July, he wrote as follows to the Editor of the "Scots Musical Museum:"—"Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though, alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow-consuming illness, which hangs over me, will, I doubt much, my ever-dear friend, arrest my sun before he has reached his middle career. However, hope is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it as well as I can." This was the last letter save one that the poet dated from Dumfries. After writing it he proceeded to Brow, then a hamlet numbering about a dozen houses, the chief of which was an inn, kept by a Mr. Davidson, who willingly allotted the "chaumer en" of his little hostelry to Burns as a lodger.* There was a chalybeate well about a hundred yards from the poet's residence, that then, as now, drew invalids to the place; but Brow being, eighty years ago, a station on the route between Dumfries and Carlisle, was less sequestered than it is at the present day. Often great herds of cattle going south rested for a night in the neighbouring merse, while their drovers proved the best customers that the clachan inn possessed. Fresh air, sea-bathing, and a powerful medicinal spring were now placed within the reach of the sorely-stricken bard; and they appeared for a day or two to exercise a beneficial influence upon him. Would that the effect were lasting and decided! Winds of the South, play with reviving power upon his haggard cheek; tide of the Solway, whose praise he sweetly sang, give vigour to his wasted frame; waters of the Well distill your strongest anodyne to save from an early death the illustrious sufferer, and become ever after famous in his song! But a power stronger than theirs is at work, with which their healing virtues cannot cope. Mrs. Burns states in her memoranda that her husband used to read the Bible to their boys, and that after his death William was in the habit of remarking, "Mother, I cannot see those sublime things in the Bible that my father used to see." During the last sickness of the bard he often pored over the pages of the Sacred Volume, and said once to his wife, "If the rest of them"—meaning Syme and Maxwell—"knew that I was so religious, they would

* The little cabin was remorselessly removed in 1863, as if it had never been associated with the great poet, and was of no more account than so much vulgar stone and clay.

laugh at me."* One of the few things he took with him to Brow was an old pocket Bible; and who shall rashly venture to say that when studying it, as he did, he found "no balm in Gilead" when all medicinal influences proved in vain?

Some time before the poet's illness his friendly intercourse with Mrs. Walter Riddel was interrupted; but it was renewed on Solway side under circumstances which she has herself narrated. The lady of Woodley Park was at this time residing in the vicinity of Brow for the benefit of her health; and on the second day of the poet's sojourn there she sent her carriage, with a request that he would favour her with a visit—all her coldness towards him having vanished when she heard of his dangerous condition. When he came, she says, "the stamp of death was imprinted on his features; and his first salutation was, 'Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world!'" to which she replied, that it seemed a doubtful case which of them should be there soonest, though she hoped he would get time to write her epitaph. He showed great concern about his literary fame, lamenting that he had not put his unpublished papers in a state of arrangement, a task which he could not now undertake. Mrs. Riddel "had seldom seen his mind greater or more collected" than on this occasion. Her account of the interview closes with the sorrowful intimation—"The next day I saw him again, and we parted to meet no more." Mr. James Gracie, banker, Dumfries,† having inquired after the poet's health, and offered to send a carriage to bring him home, received an answer which breathed a scintillation of hope. "It would be doing injustice to this place," says the invalid, "not to acknowledge that my rheumatisms have derived great benefits from it already; but, alas! my loss of appetite still

* Memoranda, p. xxiv.

† Mr. Gracie was on terms of great intimacy with Burns, and in reference to his burghal rank as Dean of Guild, was complimented by the poet in the following "rough and ready" epigram:—

"Gracie, thou art a man of worth,
Oh be thou Dean for ever!
May he be —— to hell henceforth
Who fau'ts thy weight or measure."

On a warm summer day the friends met at a funeral in St. Michael's church-yard. When the company were about to separate, Mr. Gracie said, "Burns, as the weather is so hot, I shall be happy to treat you to a glass of porter." "Take away the final r," replied the poet, with his usual readiness, "and I'll accept your offer."

continues." He added that he would not require to take advantage of Mr. Gracie's kind offer till the beginning of the following week. Next day he wrote a letter to his wife—the last of countless communications in prose and verse sent by him to the faithful sharer of his fortunes. Beautiful in sentiment and diction, it is addressed to "My Dearest Love," tells her that he has reaped benefit from his stay at Brow, expresses happiness on learning from Miss Jessie Lewars that the family are all well, and closes with saying that he would see her on Tuesday next; altogether a beautiful, though unconscious, winding-up of the poet's written intercourse with his Bonnie Jean.

Burns being off duty, his salary was slightly reduced, and, like the "puir tenant bodies" spoken of in "The Twa Dogs," he was sometimes rather "scant o' cash" at Brow. The "halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food," was the only dish he could take; and port wine was prescribed for the purpose of recruiting his strength. His landlord, Mr. Davidson, did not deal in wines, and on one occasion, it is said, when the bard's stock of money as well as of port was exhausted, he, though ill-fitted for the journey, travelled the distance of a mile to Clarencefield, in order to see if Mr. John Burney, who kept an inn there, and who was married to a daughter of Mr. Davidson's, would help him in his time of need. Placing an empty bottle on the counter, he asked for a bottle of port wine; and when that was handed to him, he whispered to Mr. Burney that "the muckle deil had got into his pouch,* and was its only occupant;" but, taking his watch seal in his hand (the veritable seal on which his armorial bearing was engraved†), he tendered it to the landlord as a security. The

* The same idea is expressed in the poem addressed to Collector Mitchell,

"Alake, alake, the meikle Deil
Wi' a' his witches
Are at it, skelpin! jig and reel,
In my poor pouches."

† When Burns, in March, 1793, commissioned Mr. Cunningham to get a Highland pebble converted into a watch seal, his directions about the engraving of it were as follows:—"On a field, azure, a holly-bush, seeded, proper, in base; a shepherd's pipe and crook, saltier-wise, also, proper in chief, on a wreath of the colours, a woodlark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper, for crest. Two mottoes: round the top of the crest, *Wood Notes Wild*; at the bottom of the shield, in the usual place, *Better a wee bush than nae bield*." We are indebted for the above anecdote to Mr. Scott, the intelligent schoolmaster of Clarencefield, to whom it was related by Mrs. Burney, some years before her death, which happened about twenty-five years ago. She also gave to Mr. Scott the copy of the Bible used by Burns

landlady, who was standing by, observing that Burns was about to unfasten the seal, stamped indignantly with her foot by way of protest, while her husband, in the same generous mind as herself, pushed the poet gently to the door, making him welcome to the wine without money and without pledge.

Assuming that this anecdote is true, as it has been furnished on good authority, it would be wrong to infer from it that Burns could not have readily obtained as much wine as he required in a different way. A word from him to Mrs. Riddel, or to any one of a dozen friends in Dumfries, would have been promptly responded to with a plentiful supply of port, or any other cordial of which he stood in need. It is right for us further to state that when Mr. Graham of Fintry heard of the poet's illness, though unacquainted with its dangerous nature, he offered his assistance towards procuring him the means of preserving his health, but that the letter, dated on the 15th July, reached its destination when too late to be of service. And it is also worth mentioning, on the authority of Mr. Findlater, that Commissioner Graham, regretting his inability to continue the poet's full salary, sent him a private donation of £5, which nearly or totally made up the deficit.

Many kindly attentions were paid to the poet by the people of the neighbourhood. He was invited one evening to tea by Mrs. Craig, the wife of the Rev. John Craig, minister of the parish; and he made an effort to appear at the manse, and to converse in his usual animated manner. Mr. Craig being laid aside at the time by ill health, the honours of the house, afterwards so renowned for its hospitality, were done by Mrs. Craig and her daughter, Miss Agnes Craig, who subsequently became the wife of the Rev. Henry Duncan,* her father's successor. Miss Craig, who had a fine literary taste, was a warm admirer of the poetry of Burns, and had manifested the deepest interest in the poet since he came to reside in the parish. She was much struck with the debilitated frame and melancholy air of the great man, who was too visibly hastening to the grave; and she remembered ever afterwards the look

when lodging at Brow, saying that "it was much used by him when there." Mr. Burney is still remembered at Clarencefield as a worthy, benevolent gentleman. His house is the fifth in the village; and besides occupying it as a respectable hotel, he was tenant of a large farm in the parish. A slightly different version of the anecdote about his kindness to Burns was recently communicated to a newspaper by Mr. R. P. Drummond of Perth.

* Afterwards Dr. Henry Duncan, distinguished as the originator of Savings Banks, and for his high literary and scientific attainments.

and tone with which he described himself to her mother as "a poor plucked pigeon." In the desperate game of life, which he had played often wildly and not well, he had been a loser; and he felt himself utterly bankrupt. Such at least was the mournful feeling of the hour. In the course of the evening the declining summer sun happened to shine in strongly through the window, and Miss Craig, to save him from supposed annoyance, hastily rose to pull down the blind; but the dying poet prevented her, saying, "Let the sun shine in upon us, my dear young lady; he has not now long to shine for me."

Had the poet's mind been kept at ease as regards worldly matters, his case might possibly have been redeemed from utter desperation; but during the critical second week of his residence at Brow he received a letter from a Dumfries solicitor, Mr. Matthew Penn, requiring payment of a bill, amounting to £7 4s., due to Mr. Williamson, draper, for his volunteer uniform. It had been simply placed with other over-due accounts in the hands of the legal gentleman, as that seemed the best mode for getting them discharged. It contained no threat; but Burns's mind was so unhinged by disease that the missive appeared to him the very language of menace. Had he been in health, his knowledge of business would have enabled him to see the real meaning of Mr. Penn's letter: as matters stood, it told upon him with overwhelming force. "A rascal of a haberdasher"—thus he wrote to his cousin Mr. James Burnes, at Montrose—"to whom I owe a considerable bill, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process against me, and will infallibly put my emaciated body into jail. Will you be so good as accommodate me, and that by return of post, with ten pounds." On the same day (12th July) he used similar language in a letter to Mr. George Thomson:—"After all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post." Both of the gentlemen promptly responded to the poet's heartrending appeal. Burns's health, as we have seen, had slightly improved, and he had penned at Brow the charming lyric—alas that it was his last!—"Fairest maid on Devon's banks," when the receipt of this lawyer's letter provoked a dangerous relapse. "Home, home, home—if only to die!" Such was now *the language of his heart.*

Allan Cunningham, who was then residing at or near Dumfries,* says:—"The poet returned on the 18th in a small spring-cart. The ascent to his house was steep, and the cart stopped at the foot of the Mill-hole Brae: when he alighted he shook much, and stood with difficulty; he seemed unable to stand upright. He stooped as if in pain, and walked tottering towards his own door: his looks were hollow and ghastly, and those who saw him then expected never to see him in life again."† The same author has given an affecting picture of the state of public feeling in the town during the brief interval between Burns's return and "the last scene of all." Dumfries, he says, "was like a besieged place. It was known he was dying, and the anxiety, not of the rich and the learned only, but of the mechanics and peasants, exceeded all belief. Wherever two or three people stood together their talk was of Burns, and of him alone. They spoke of his history, of his person, of his works, of his family, of his fame, and of his untimely and approaching fate, with a warmth and an enthusiasm which will ever endear Dumfries to my remembrance. All that he said or was saying—the opinions of the physicians (and Maxwell was a kind and skilful one) were eagerly caught up and reported from street to street. . . . As his life drew near to a close, the eager yet decorous solicitude of his fellow-townsmen increased. It is the practice of the young men of Dumfries to meet in the street during the hours of remission from labour, and by these means I had an opportunity of witnessing the general solicitude of all ranks and of all ages. His differences with them on some important points were forgotten and forgiven: they thought only of his genius, of the delight his compositions had diffused; and they talked of him with the same awe as of some departing spirit whose voice was to gladden them no more."‡

The dying bard was laid in the room to the south on the second floor. Upon the scenes which have, so to speak, localised this little dormitory in the hearts of all the poet's loving votaries, tearful memory often "broods:" his return to it from Brow, so terribly shattered that Mrs. Burns was struck nearly dumb with grief; the letter written by him to his father-in-law on the same day—the last words he ever penned—praying for Mrs. Armour's

* Cunningham was little more than twelve years of age at this time, and had come to Dumfries to learn the trade of a mason. When in his apprenticeship, the future poet and novelist helped to build the Burgh Academy and the Episcopal Chapel in Buccleuch Street, now occupied by the Wesleyans.

† Lockhart's *Life of Burns*, p. 279. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

presence, as Mrs. Burns was daily expecting to be confined, and he felt that his own end was drawing nigh; the fitful flashes of kindly humour which escaped from him, as, when he prayed a brother volunteer not to let the awkward squad fire over him; the hopeless symptoms that set in on the 19th—a tremor that shook his bodily system, a fever that fired his blood and touched his brain; the dawn of the 20th, bringing no relief, so that Maxwell begins to despair—Jessie Lewars, however, bearing up heroically while ministering to the dying patient, and Bonnie Jean stealing in every now and then from her own bedroom opposite to see how he fares; while Syme, Findlater, and others pass up stairs to take a farewell look of their illustrious friend; the ensuing night, forerunner of the long, starless night of the grave; the morning of the 21st, when his life came to be measured by moments, for long before meridian the spirit of Burns, recalled from earth, had passed for ever away—his last words, according to the testimony of his eldest son, having been a muttered execration on the legal agent by whom his closing days had been unintentionally embittered and curtailed.

The local newspaper, published a few days afterwards, contained the following intimation of the mournful event:—"Died here, on the morning of the 21st inst., and in the thirty-eighth year of his age, ROBERT BURNS, the Scottish bard. His manly form and penetrating eye strikingly indicated extraordinary mental vigour. For originality of wit, rapidity of conception, and fluency of nervous phraseology, he was unrivalled. Animated by the fire of nature, he uttered sentiments which by their pathos melted the heart to tenderness, or expanded the mind by their sublimity. As a luminary emerging from behind a cloud, he arose at once into notice; and his works and his name can never die while living divine Poesy shall agitate the chords of the human heart."

These words but inadequately express the loss which Scotland and the world sustained by the premature demise of this gifted, and, with all his defects, still glorious son of song. A sympathy for the varied sufferings he had undergone, a regret for the neglect he had experienced, now mingled with and intensified the homage given to his genius, and caused his faults of life to be overlooked, if not forgotten. Intense was the feeling of sorrow that prevailed in Dumfries and neighbourhood when it was known that the mighty heart of the man who had long given life and lustre to the locality was throbbless. He had been, generally speaking, honoured and appreciated by the people of the place; *but when he lay hushed in the sleep of death, he became to*

them doubly dear. All deplored the loss of such a distinguished citizen, and shared in the general lamentation that so little had been done by the dignitaries and rulers of the nation to keep him in worldly comfort and economize his precious life. And yet, whilst we share this painful feeling, we are inclined to think that Burns's fame has benefited by the pity which his fate awakens. If he had received a greater share of "good things" in this life, been feted, caressed, and pensioned, the world might have not the less admired his productions, but he would have awakened far less of personal interest. We might in that case have liked Burns's poems equally well (though even this is doubtful), but we would not have loved or heeded so much Burns himself. Thus, if this theory be true, his earthly crosses and poverty enriched the heritage of his endless fame, and dowered it as well "by the tears" as by "the praises of all time."

The remains of the bard were removed to the Trades' Hall, in High Street, on the evening of Sabbath, the 24th of July, preparatory to the funeral, which, at the request of his brother volunteers, it was resolved should be conducted with military honours. A regiment of the Cinque Ports Cavalry, and the Fencible Infantry of Angusshire, then quartered in Dumfries, offered their assistance on the solemn occasion; and the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood signified a wish to take part in the procession. On Monday, the 25th, in the presence of an immense crowd of tearful sympathizers, the funeral train moved slowly down to St. Michael's cemetery. A party of the volunteers appointed to perform the requisite military service at the interment were stationed in front, with their arms reversed; the other members of the company supported or surrounded the coffin, on which were placed the hat and sword of their illustrious fellow-soldier; the civilians were ranged in the rear. In this order the procession moved onward; whilst the streets through which it passed were lined by the horse and foot soldiers, and the accompanying band played the "Dead March" in "Saul." Arrived at the place of sepulture, the body was committed to the tomb; three volleys of musketry fired over the grave completing the affecting ceremony. "The spectacle," says Dr. Currie, "was in a high degree grand and solemn, and accorded with the general sentiments of sympathy and sorrow which the occasion had called forth." On the forenoon of this sad day the newly-made widow was seized with

the pains of labour, and, just as the grave closed over her husband's dust, gave birth to a son, who died in infancy.

Of the other members of the bard's family, only one survives, William Nicol. Both he and his brother, James Glencairn, obtained commissions in the East India Company's army; and, after a highly honourable career, each attained the rank of lieutenant-colonel. They resided together for many years at Cheltenham, honoured and beloved for their benevolence and amiability. The eldest son, Robert, went to London in 1804, where he held a clerkship in the Stamp Office till 1833, at which date he retired to Dumfries. He possessed a considerable amount of poetical genius, was a good musician, an excellent mathematician and linguist; and whilst he mentally resembled his father more than either of his brothers, he was the only one of the family in whom the features of the bard were distinctly traceable. Robert's conversational powers were also of a high order, and his company, as may be well supposed, was much sought after and relished by such strangers as his father's fame attracted to Dumfries. He died in 1857; his brother James, in 1865; and both were laid beside their father's dust, under the mausoleum.

Mrs. Burns continued to reside till her death in the house which has been hallowed by her husband's presence, an object of universal respect on account of her many virtues, and the interest which attached to her as the "Bonnie Jean" of his verse—the uncomplaining, fond, and faithful companion of his wedded life. By the proceeds of a fund raised for the widow, she was enabled to bring up her sons in a creditable way. In 1817, Mr. Fox Maule (afterwards Lord Dalhousie) settled a pension on Mrs. Burns of £50 a year, after a vain attempt to obtain for her a Government annuity: this she enjoyed about eighteen months, when her son James, having been promoted to a situation in the Indian Commissariat, made such arrangements for her comfortable maintenance as allowed her to resign the pension, which, if so disposed, she might have retained for life.*

* The poet, by his wife Jean Armour, had nine children—five sons and four daughters; two of the former, and the whole of the latter, died in childhood. Robert, the eldest son, left a daughter, Eliza, who married Dr. Everitt, a surgeon in the East India Company's service. She has been long a widow, and now resides, with her only daughter, Miss Everitt, in Belfast. Colonel William N. Burns is a widower, without issue. Colonel *James G.* Burns left a daughter by his first marriage, who married Dr.

For many years, a simple slab of freestone, placed over the poet's grave by his widow, was his only material monument. Eventually, however, a general movement was made for the erection of a mausoleum in some degree worthy of his genius; and as money flowed in liberally for the scheme, from almost every quarter, and from lowly peasants and mechanics up to Majesty itself, the work was proceeded with and completed in 1815. The mausoleum, in form like a Grecian temple, was designed by Mr. T. F. Hunt of London; and a mural sculpture for the interior was supplied by an Italian artist named Turnerelli, intended to embody one of the poet's own conceptions—the genius of Coila finding her favourite son at the plough, and throwing her inspiring mantle over him. The figures were critically inspected by a committee of gentlemen, including the poet's brother, Gilbert, who signified his high satisfaction with the graceful appearance of Coila, and the ethereal lightness of her mantle; and under the guidance of his correct eye and tenacious memory, the sculptor was enabled to render more faithful the likeness of the principal figure. As a whole, however, the statuary is not of the highest class, though it has been sometimes greatly underrated. This much may be said in its favour, that its meaning is intelligible; and that if it does not satisfy fastidious art-critics, it appeals successfully to the popular eye and heart.

There being no room at the north corner of the churchyard where Burns was at first buried for the erection of a bulky structure, the mausoleum was built on a site in the south-east, so that the body had to be transported thither—a delicate duty, which was performed with as much privacy as possible. On the 19th of September, Mr. William Grierson of Boatford, the zealous secretary to the committee, Mr. James Thomson, superintendent of the monument, Mr. Milligan, builder, and Mr. James Bogie, gardener, Terraughty, “proceeded to the spot before the sun had risen, and made so good use of their time that the imposing ceremony was well-nigh completed before the public had time to assemble, or in fact were aware of the important duty in which the others had been engaged.”* Two sons of the poet had been laid beside him—Maxwell Burns, the posthumous child, who

Berkeley Hutchinson. They had a son and three daughters, who, with their mother, still survive. By a second marriage he had one child, Miss Burns, who also survives. Such are the existing descendants of the national bard in 1870.

* M'Diarmid's *Picture of Dumfries*, p. 85.

died in 1799, and Francis Wallace Burns, who died in 1803, aged fourteen. "On opening the grave the coffins of the boys were found in a tolerably entire state, placed in shells, and conveyed to the vault with the greatest care. As a report had been spread that the principal coffin was made of oak, a hope was entertained that it would be possible to transport it from the north to the east corner of St. Michael's without opening it, or disturbing the sacred deposit it contained. But this hope proved fallacious. On testing the coffin, it was found to be composed of the ordinary materials, and ready to yield to the slightest pressure; and the lid removed, a spectacle was unfolded which, considering the fame of the mighty dead, has rarely been witnessed by a single human being. There were the remains of the great poet, to all appearance nearly entire, and retaining various traces of vitality, or rather exhibiting the features of one who had newly sunk into the sleep of death: the lordly forehead, arched and high, the scalp still covered with hair, and the teeth perfectly firm and white. The scene was so imposing that most of the workmen stood bare and uncovered—as the late Dr. Gregory did at the exhumation of the remains of the illustrious hero of Bannockburn—and at the same time felt their frames thrilling with some undefinable emotion, as they gazed on the ashes of him whose fame is as wide as the world itself. But the effect was momentary; for when they proceeded to insert a shell or case below the coffin, the head separated from the trunk, and the whole body, with the exception of the bones, crumbled into dust."* When the remains had been religiously gathered up, they were placed in a new coffin, and interred beside the dust of the two boys. The vault was then closed; and the party, solemnized by their close communion with "the buried majesty" of this Coila-crowned king of song, left the place.

Nineteen years passed by, and the vault of the mausoleum was opened to receive a new inmate—the poet's widow, who died after surviving him the long period of thirty-eight years. How, on the night preceding the interment (30th March, 1834), a number of gentlemen, after receiving due authority, descended into the vault, and obtained a cast of the poet's skull for a phrenological purpose, is well known.† Dr. Blacklock of Dumfries, one of the party,

* Picture of Dumfries, p. 86.

† It was Mr. James Fraser (afterwards Bailie Fraser) who took the cast, and he still retains the original matrix. A cast of the skull having been

drew up a report of the appearance of the cranium, from which it appears that it was found to be in a high state of preservation. "The bones of the face and palate," he says, "were also sound; and some small portions of black hair, with a very few gray hairs intermixed, were observed while detaching some extraneous matter from the occiput." When the vault was once more opened, for the interment of Burns's eldest son, in May, 1857, the skull of the bard was found to have altered very little since the cast had been taken from it. To secure its better preservation, the vacant space of the enclosing casket was filled with pitch, after which the precious "dome of thought" was restored to its position, to be no more disturbed, we trust, till the day of doom.

transmitted to the Phrenological Society of Edinburgh, Mr. George Combe drew up from it an elaborate paper on the cerebral development of the poet. He laid great stress upon its size, $22\frac{1}{4}$ inches in circumference, and upon the extreme activity of brain, indicated by other data. Commenting upon the whole, Mr. Combe said:—"No phrenologist can look upon this head, and consider the circumstances in which Burns was placed, without vivid feelings of regret. Burns must have walked the earth with a consciousness of great superiority over his associates, in the station in which he was placed—of powers calculated for a far higher sphere than that which he was able to reach—and of passions which he could with difficulty restrain, and which it was fatal to indulge. If he had been placed from infancy in the higher ranks of life, liberally educated, and employed in pursuits corresponding to his powers, the inferior portion of his nature would have lost its energy, while his better qualities would have assumed a decided and permanent superiority."



APPENDIX.

BURNS AND THE REV. MR. KIRKPATRICK—THOMAS CARLYLE.

WHEN Burns came to reside at Ellisland he soon found that the parish minister, the Rev. Joseph Kirkpatrick, entertained very different sentiments from his own in regard to the Stuart dynasty; yet he not infrequently made his appearance in the parish church. A day of thanksgiving for the mercies conferred by the Revolution having been appointed by the General Assembly to be observed on the 5th Nov., 1788, Mr. Kirkpatrick took occasion, during the service in the church, to stigmatise the persecutions that disgraced the reigns of Charles II. and his brother James. The poet was present, and was highly indignant at the language employed by the worthy minister. On his return from church he actually wrote a letter to a London newspaper, the *Star*, complaining of the treatment which the Stuarts received on such occasions. Burns never could have approved of the persecutions of the Covenanters under the Stuart family, for he has told us what he thought of the Solemn League and Covenant; but from national sentiment, more than from anything like deliberate conviction, he was a sort of Jacobite. When we look to his strong love of constitutional liberty, we must admit that his Jacobitism was an inconsistency in his character.

It may here also be noticed, as one of those incidents or coincidences which often occur in biography, that about forty years after Burns came to dwell in Dunscore, there took up his abode in the same parish a man who has done more perhaps than any other critic to fling a splendid light on the true characteristics of the poet's genius. In 1827, Thomas Carlyle, then newly married, came to reside at Craigenputtock, a small estate belonging to his wife, daughter of Dr. Welsh, and a lineal descendant of John Knox. It was at Craigenputtock that Carlyle wrote for the *Edinburgh Review* that magnificent essay on Burns that has given the tone to most of the Burns criticism that has since appeared. Carlyle also frequently attended the

parish church, and was on good terms with the minister, the late Dr. Brydon. Two ministers had come between Mr. Kirkpatrick and Dr. Brydon, namely, the late Dr. Inglis, of Lochrutton, and the Rev. Cunningham Burnside, father of the late George Burnside, minister of Urr.

BURNS AND WORDSWORTH.

Cumberland may be called the near neighbour of Dumfriesshire, though the Solway rolls between the two counties. The bold Cumberland mountains may be seen from almost every part of the Scottish shire, while the higher ranges of that shire, crowned with Galloway Criffel to the west, are as conspicuous from the English coast. But apart from material or geographical considerations, what a poetic tie might have been formed between Cumberland and Dumfriesshire during the period embraced in our narrative! While the genius of Burns was rapidly burning to its socket in Dumfriesshire, there frequently dwelt in contiguous Cumberland the greatest of all her sons, a tall and somewhat ungainly young man, simple in manners and in garb, but full of fine imagination and poetic enthusiasm, not quenched, but only fanned by high literary culture. This was William Wordsworth, only eleven years younger than Burns, and destined to rival the Scottish bard himself as a great and original poetic genius. Both from native temperament and carefully formed opinions, Wordsworth was just the man to appreciate and enjoy a poet like Burns, and we have his own authority both in prose and verse for saying that he did admire that poet exceedingly, and eagerly entered on the original path he had opened up. Burns and Wordsworth, the one turned of thirty and the other little above twenty, were for a considerable period so near each other that their eyes may frequently have rested at the same moment upon the summit of Skiddaw or of Criffel; yet they never met, and it is likely enough that the elder poet never heard of the existence of the younger one. But had they met and conversed together, or formed a friendship based on kindred genius, what precious additions to literary history and the biography of Burns might have been the result. The younger, yet more sober bard, might have soothed and restrained the fervent spirit of the elder, while cheering him with his admiration and sympathy. That elder bard, again, might have given a fresh stimulus, and probably a better direction, to the genius of the young Cumbrian, who was girding himself, somewhat perversely, for a war with the critics of his age on behalf of simplicity and nature in poetry, qualities which at first were often caricatured rather than illustrated by his own example.

When Wordsworth and his sympathetic sister Dorothy visited Dumfries,

seven years after Burns's death, he mused mournfully over the grave of his mighty departed brother, whom he had so passionately admired but had never seen. The three poems he wrote on the occasion were worthy of the great author and his great subject. We just quote the following lines as illustrating some of our remarks :—

Alas! where'er the current tends,
 Regret pursues, and with it blends,—
 Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends,
 By Skiddaw seen—
Neighbours we were, and loving friends
We might have been.

* * * * * *

The tear will start, and let it flow;
 Thou poor inhabitant below,
 At this dread moment, even so,
 Might we together
 Have sat and talked where gowans blow,
 Or on wild heather.

We also give the following, as showing how the one great genius appreciated and followed the other :—

Fresh as the flower whose modest worth
 He sang, his genius "glinted" forth,
 Rose like a star that, touching earth,
 For so it seems,
 Doth glorify its humble birth
 With matchless beams.

* * * * * *

I mourned with thousands, but as one
 More deeply grieved, for he was gone
Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And shewed my youth
How verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.

These verses, not so well known as they deserve to be, form one of the finest tributes to the genius of Burns that has yet been given to the world.

Dumfries being an old historical town, and surrounded by fine scenery, presents considerable attractions to the tourist, but its associations with Burns, and the memorials it possesses of the national bard, draw to it more travellers than anything scenic or archæological of which the burgh can boast.

THE HOUSE IN BURNS'S STREET.

The house in which Burns spent his latest years and breathed his last adjoins the premises of the Ragged School, in a niche of which may be seen a memorial bust of the bard, placed there by a most worthy gentleman, the late Mr. William Ewart, M. P. for the Dumfries Burghs, with the words, "In the adjoining house to the north lived and died the Poet of his Country and of Mankind, Robert Burns." Ascending three steps at the front door, we are soon within the walls of the modest little mansion. There are, in the lower story, a "but" and "ben," in other words, a kitchen and parlour, both used as such when inhabited by Burns, and the latter, a fine commodious room, the best in the house: above are two rooms of an unequal size; the smaller of them, an oblong low-ceilinged apartment, measuring fifteen feet by nine and a-half, being the one in which he expired. Two attic apartments, used as bedrooms for the children, and a closet nine feet square between the rooms on the second floor, complete the accommodation of the poet's house. Burns could write, and often did, with his boys frolicking around him; but sometimes in his inspired moments he withdrew to this closet-sanctum, making it the birth-place of effusions that first soothed or gladdened his own heart, and then going forth into the outer world made the atmosphere thereof musical for ever. Dumfries and vicinity abound with relics of Burns, in the form of photographs, poems, scraps of writing, pieces of furniture, and such like; his dwelling-house, however, contains none, but it is itself, with the solitary exception, perhaps, of the "auld clay biggin" on the banks of Doon, the greatest and best material memento of the national poet.

THE GLOBE TAVERN.

Writing to Mr. George Thomson in April, 1796, Burns states "that his letter would be delivered by a Mrs. Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern here, which for these many years past has been my howf, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze." This hostelry, still kept as a public-house, is situated in one of the High Street closes, number 44, opposite the head of Assembly Street. It is of three stories, with about a dozen good apartments; and eighty years ago it must have been one of the best middle-class tenements of the town. Except for necessary repairs to keep it in its present condition, it has undergone little change since the time when it was the poet's favourite rendezvous: windows, doors, flooring, wood-panelling, stair-railings, remaining for the most part unaltered. The howf proper of the bard is a little snugger on the ground-floor, entered

through the kitchen, measuring fourteen feet by twelve, and panelled on every side by painted Memel: one of its cosy nooks displays the words "Burns's Corner," and contains an arm-chair, in which it is said he used to sit when enjoying with a bosom cronie or two his "nipperkin" of whisky punch. Above the fire-place is a tolerably fair cartoon representing Coila casting over her favourite son her mantle of inspiration; while on each side is a picture of the "rough bur thistle," from which he turned aside his weeding hook "to spare the symbol dear." Two small panes of glass in the window of a room on the second floor bear the marks of his diamond; and it is known that other panes, emblazoned with similar sketchings, made floral and classical other windows of this famous tavern. One of the existing inscriptions is, as we have already seen, in praise of Lovely Polly Stewart; the second is a new rendering of part of an old song—

"Gin a body meet a body
Coming through the grain;
Gin a body kles a body,
The thing's a body's ain."

THE MAUSOLEUM.

Those who feel a melancholy pleasure in meditating with Harvey among the tombs, will find in no provincial town throughout the kingdom anything to match the extensive necropolis of St. Michael's, which has been used as a burial-place for more than seven hundred years; and is crowded with tombstones, from the inscriptions on which much of the annals of the town might be written, while many of the monuments have a wider significance, and some are of universal interest. Overtopping them all, and attracting greater attention than any, stands the Mausoleum, already described, reared over the dust of Burns—a shrine to which hundreds of pilgrims from a distance every year repair. The inscription tells us in a foreign tongue that the monument is "In æternum honorem Roberti Burns;" and though it was bad taste to Latinize the words, and thus seal up their meaning except to the learned—a popular epitaph is not needed by the man whose name and fame are impressed on the hearts of all his countrymen—

". . . Thou need'st no eptaph: while earth
Hath souls of melody and hearts of worth,
Thine own prond songs, through distant ages sent,
Shall form at once thy dirge and monument."

As already noticed, there are numerous mementos of the poet in Dumfries;

the following list includes a large proportion of these and of others in the district.

RELICS OF BURNS IN DUMFRIES AND DISTRICT.

"De-Lolme on the Constitution," with Inscription in Burns's handwriting.—Dumfries Public Library, Mechanics' Institution.

"Statistical Account of Scotland," with "The Solemn League and Covenant" (1st draft) written in pencil at page 652.—Dumfries Public Library.

Kilmarnock Edition of Poems.—Mr. W. R. M'Diarmid.

Collins's Poems, with Inscription, and Poem in pencil to Jean Lorimer,

"The lassie wi' the lint-white locks."—Mr. W. R. M'Diarmid.

Letter to Provost Staig, Dumfries.—Mr. W. R. M'Diarmid.

Mrs. Burns's Door-knocker.—Mr. W. R. M'Diarmid.

"Holy Willie's Prayer."—Mr. R. A. Dickson.

"Holy Willie's Prayer."—Mr. Wm. Brown.

"Holy Willie's Prayer."—Observatory.

Draft of a Letter to Mrs. M'Murdo, Drumlanrig, with deletions and alterations.—Observatory.

Finished Copy of same Letter.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Jacobite Song, "It was a' for our rightfu' King."—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Verse written with diamond on pane of glass taken from window of the Globe Inn, Dumfries.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Signature of Bonnie Jean (*bis*) to document, witnessed by Wm. Hyslop, of the Globe.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Odd Volume of Spenser, with Burns's Autograph Signature.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Odd Volume of "Spectator," which belonged to Burns's father, was often read by the poet, and has an Autograph of William Burness.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Chair which belonged to Burns.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Tea Cup and Saucer which belonged to Burns.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Teapot which belonged to Burns.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Wine Glass which belonged to Burns.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Lace Collar worn by Mrs. Burns.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Piece of Bedstead on which Burns died.—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Copy of Tax-paper, on which Burns wrote the Inventory, signed by Robert Aiken, to whom he inscribed the "Cotter's Saturday Night."—Mr. D. Dunbar.

Portions of Burns's Land-measuring Chain.—Mrs. Corson M'Gowan.

Linen Toilet Cover used at Ellisland.—Mrs. Corson M'Gowan.

Testament which belonged to Mrs. Burns.—Mrs. Corson M'Gowan.

Chair used in parlour at Ellisland.—Mrs. Corson M'Gowan.

- Round Table used in parlour at Ellisland.—Mr. A. Nicholson.
 Five Chairs used in parlour at Ellisland.—Mr. A. Nicholson.
 Small pair of Tongs used in parlour at Ellisland.—Mr. A. Nicholson.
 Iron Fender used in parlour at Ellisland.—Mr. A. Nicholson.
 Wooden Ladle which belonged to Burns.—Mr. A. Nicholson.
 Two Leaves of Excise Book in Burns's handwriting.—Mr. A. Nicholson.
 Letter to Mrs. Burns, dated from Ellisland a few days prior to her arrival there.—Mr. A. Nicholson.
 Fragment of Song.—Mr. J. Johnstone.
 Fragment of Song.—Mr. J. Johnstone.
 Letter to Dr. Mundell, Dumfries.—Mr. A. Crosbie.
 Burns's Masonic Apron.—Mr. T. Thorburn.
 Burns's Masonic Mallet.—Mr. T. Thorburn.
 Minute Book of St. Andrew's Masonic Lodge, showing Burns's admission, 27th December, 1788.—Mr. T. Thorburn.
 Tea Tray which belonged to Burns.—Mr. T. Aird.
 Ashet which belonged to Burns.—Rev. D. Hogg.
 Vol. III. of "Scots Musical Miscellany," with handwriting of Burns on page 213.—Rev. D. Hogg.
 Curd Cutter which belonged to Burns.—Mr. Lockerbie.
 "The Five Carlins," one of the Election Ballads.—Mr. Finlayson, Kirkcudbright.
 Letter to Mr. Gracie, Dumfries, written from Brow a few days before the poet died.—Mr. Finlayson, Kirkcudbright.
 The Poem of "The Whistle."—Crichton Institution.
 Pair of Kid Gloves worn by Mrs. Burns.—Mrs. Brown.
 Large Tumbler which belonged to Burns.—Mrs. Brown.
 Gold Brooch worn by Mrs. Burns: the pebble was picked up by Burns in Braemar in 1786.—Mrs. M'Kenzie.
 Song, "Bonnie Jean."—Mrs. M'Kenzie.
 Love Letter written for a friend, in the Holograph of Burns.—Mrs. M'Kenzie.
 Cradle which belonged to Burns.—Mrs. Welsh.
 Bread Basket which belonged to Burns.—Mrs. Welsh.
 Wine Decanter which belonged to Burns.—Mrs. Welsh.
 Wine Glass which belonged to Burns.—Mrs. Welsh.
 Cup and Saucer which belonged to Burns.—Mrs. Welsh.
 Three Pictures which hung in the parlour at Ellisland.—Mrs. J. Gracie.
 Chair which belonged to John Syme of Ryedale, always occupied by the poet on his visits.—Mrs. Rankine.
 Links of Measuring Chain.—Mr. T. A. Currie.

Old Bible used by the poet at Brow.—Mr. Scott, Clarencefield.

The Church Pew occupied by the poet and his family in St. Michael's, Dumfries.—Mrs. Colonel Campbell.

Chair in "Burns's Corner," Globe Tavern; also, Window Panes, with Holograph verses.—Mrs. Murray, proprietrix and occupier of the Globe.

The subjoined Relics of the Poet are in the very extensive and valuable Museum of DR. GRIERSON at Thornhill:—

Original Cast of the Skull of Burns, moulded at Dumfries, 31st March, 1834.

Cross formed from a fragment of the Coffin of Burns, which was obtained by the late Mr. William Grierson, when present at exhuming the remains of the poet from the original place of interment to be deposited in the Mausoleum, September, 1815.

Portion of the Trunk of a Laburnum Tree that overhung the Hermitage at Friar's Carse.

The Poem of "The Whistle" in the handwriting of Burns, with a Letter written by the poet's brother, Gilbert Burns, addressed to the late Mr. Grierson when presenting him with the poem.

Letter written by Sir Walter Scott relating to Burns, of date 28th January, 1822, addressed to the late Mr. W. Grierson.

Printed Circular calling a Meeting in Dumfries, to take into consideration the erecting of a Mausoleum for Burns, of date 29th November, 1813, with a list of those who attended the said Meeting.

Drinking Glass that belonged to Burns. This glass, after the death of the poet, was given by his mother to Mrs. Flint, Closeburn.

Portion of the Flooring of the Parlour at Mossgiel.

Portion of the Bedstead on which Burns died.

Tumbler that belonged to Burns, which was given by him to Mr. Gracie of Dumfries.

An Excise Permit drawn out and Signed by Burns, dated at Dumfries, 12th November, 1793.

Original and Working Plans of Burns's Mausoleum by Mr. Hunt, its architect.

Various Documents relating to the poet.

